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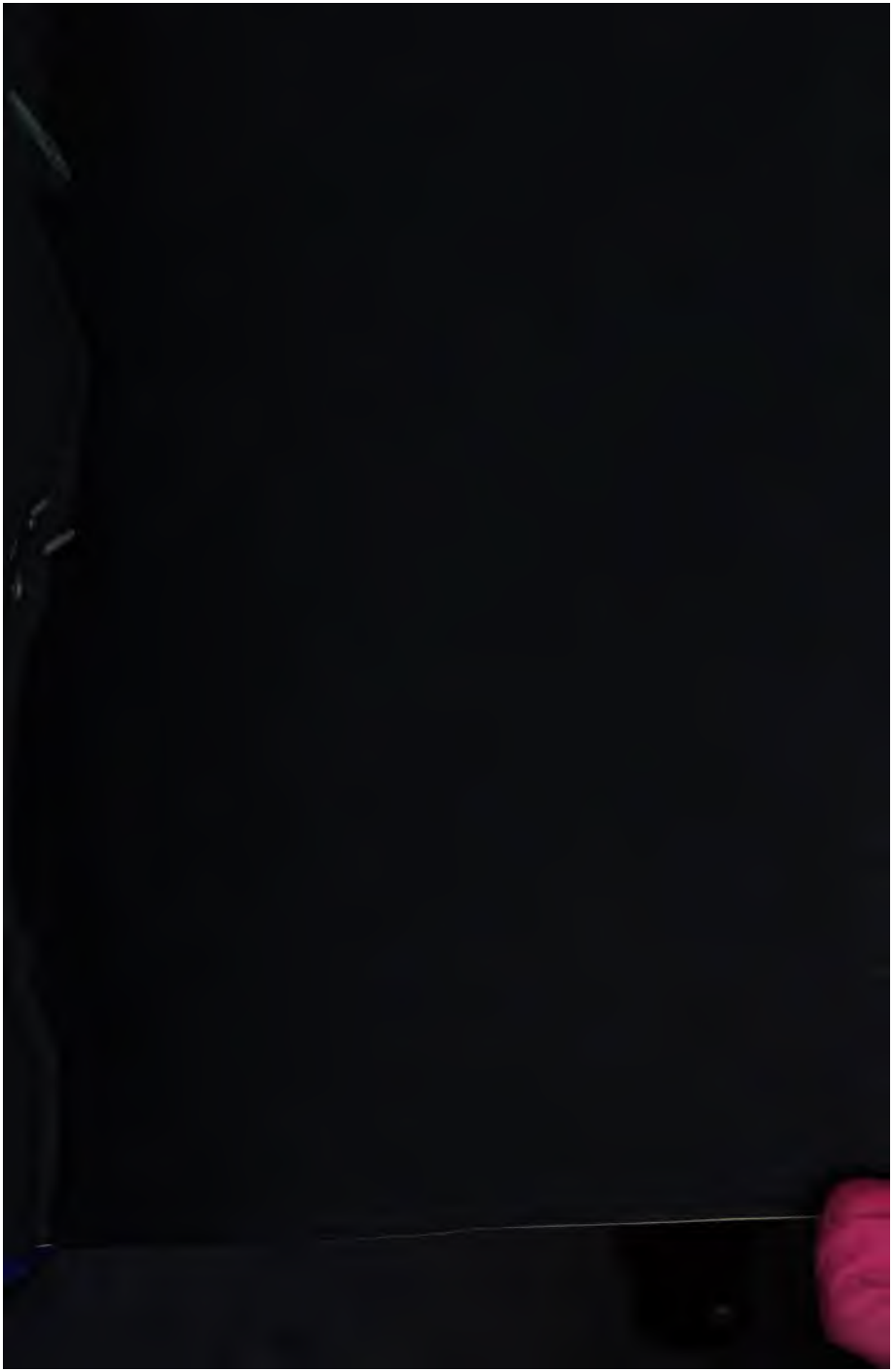

FOR LOVE AND LIFE.

VOL. II.

FOR LOVE AND LIFE.

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT,

AUTHOR OF

"CHRONICLES OF CARLINGFORD,"

"OMBRA," "MAY,"

&c., &c.

"The device on his shield was a young oak tree pulled up by the roots, with the Spanish word *Desdichado*, signifying Disinherited."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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FOR LOVE AND LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

A PAIR OF PHILANTHROPISTS.

I NEED not describe the many struggles of feeling which Edgar went through on that memorable Sunday, before he finally made up his mind to accept Mr. Tottenham's proposal, and do the only thing which remained possible for him, his only alternative between work of some sort and idleness—between spending his last little remnant of money and beginning to earn some more—a thing which he had never yet done in his life. It was very strange to the young man, after so

long an interval of a very different life, to return vicariously, as it were, not in his own right, to the habits and surroundings of luxury. He felt a whimsical inclination at first to explain to everybody he encountered that he was, so to speak, an impostor, having no right to all the good things about him, but being only Mr. Tottenham's upper servant, existing in the atmosphere of the drawing-room only on sufferance and by courtesy. People in such circumstances are generally, I believe, very differently affected, or so at least one reads in story. They are generally pictured as standing perpetually on the defensive, looking out for offence, anticipating injury, and in a sore state of compulsory humility or rather humiliation. I do not know whether Edgar's humorous character could ever have been driven by ill-usage to feel in this way, but as he had no ill-usage to put up with, but much the reverse, he took a totally different view. After the first conflict with

himself was over, which we have already indicated, he came to consider his tutorship a good joke, as indeed, I am sorry to say, everybody else did—even Phil, who was in high glee over his new instructor.

"I don't know what I am to teach him," Edgar had said to the boy's parents when he came down to the conservatory on the memorable Sunday I have already described, and joined the anxious pair.

"Teach him whatever you know," Lady Mary had answered; but Edgar's half mirthful, half dismayed sense of unfitness for the post they thrust upon him was not much altered by this impulsive speech.

"What do I know?" he said to himself next morning when, coming down early before any one else, he found himself alone in the library, with all the materials for instruction round him. Edgar had not himself been educated in England, and he did not know whether such knowledge as he possessed might not suffer from being

transmitted in an unusual way without the orthodox form. "My Latin and Greek may be good enough, though I doubt it," he said, when Mr. Tottenham joined him, "but how if they are found to be quite out of the Eton shape, and therefore no good to Phil?"

"Never mind the Eton shape, or any other shape," said Mr. Tottenham, "you heard what Mary said, and her opinion may be relied upon. Teach him what you know. Why, he is only twelve, he has time enough for mere shape, I hope."

And thus Edgar was again silenced. He was, however, a tolerably good scholar, and as it happened, in pure idleness had lately betaken himself again to those classical studies which so many men lay aside with their youth. And in the library at Tottenham's there was a crowd of books bearing upon all possible theories of education, which Edgar, with a private smile at himself, carried to his room with him in detachments, and pored over with

great impartiality, reading the most opposite systems one after another. When he told Lady Mary about his studies, she afforded immediate advice and information. She knew a great deal more about them than he did. She had tried various systems, each antagonistic to the other, in her own pet schools in the village, and she was far from having made up her mind on the subject.

"I confess to you frankly, Mr. Earnshaw," said Lady Mary, "sometimes I think we have nothing in the world to trust to but education, which is the rational view; and sometimes I feel that I put no faith in it at all."

"That is something like my own opinion," said Earnshaw, "though I have permitted you to do yourselves the injustice of appointing me tutor to Phil."

"Education, like everything else, depends so much on one's theory of life," said Lady Mary, "Mr. Tottenham and I think differently on the subject, which is

a great pity, though I don't see that it does us much harm. My husband is content to take things as they are, which is by much the more comfortable way; but that too is a matter of temperament. Phil will be sure to get on if you will bring him into real correspondence with your own mind. Molly gives me a great deal more trouble; a man can get himself educated one way or another, a woman can't."

"Is it so?" said Edgar, "pardon my ignorance. I thought most ladies were terribly well educated."

"Ah, I know what you mean!" said Lady Mary, "educated in nothings, taught to display all their little bits of superficial information. It is not only that women get no education, Mr. Earnshaw, but how are we to get it for them? Of course an effort may be made for a girl in Molly's position, with parents who fully appreciate the difficulties of the matter; but for girls of the middle classes for

instance? they get a little very bad music, and worse French, and this is considered education. I dare say you will help me by and by in one of my pet schemes. Some of my friends in town have been so very good as to join me in a little effort I am making to raise the standard. The rector here, a well-meaning sort of man, has been persuaded to join, and to give us a nicish sort of schoolroom which happens to be unoccupied, and his countenance, which does us good with old fashioned people. I have spent a good deal of time on the scheme myself, and it is one of my chief interests. I quite reckon upon you to help."

"What must I do?" said Edgar with a plaintive tone in his voice. Alas, worse had happened to him than falling into the hands of thieves who could only rob him—no more. He had fallen into the hands of good Samaritans who could do a great deal worse. He thought of ragged-schools and unruly infants; his thoughts went no

further, and to this he resigned himself with a sigh.

"Then you will really help?" cried Lady Mary delighted, "I knew from the first you would be the greatest acquisition to us. My plan is to have lectures, Mr. Earnshaw, upon various subjects; they last only during the winter, and a great number of girls have begun to attend. One of my friends takes Latin, another French. Alas, our German lecturer has just failed us! if you could supply his place it would be perfect. Then we have history, mathematics, and literature; we cannot do much of course, but even a little is better than nothing. It would not take up very much of your time; an hour and a half a week, with perhaps a moment now and then to look after exercises, &c."

"Am I expected to teach German to anybody in an hour and a half a week?" said Edgar, laughing. "It is a small expenditure for so great a result."

"Of course you think it can only be a smattering—and that a smattering is a bad thing?" said the social reformer, "but we really do produce very good results—you shall see if you will but try."

"And what branch, may I ask, do you take?" said the ignorant neophyte.

"*I*, Mr. Earnshaw! why I learn!" cried Lady Mary; "if I could I would go in for all the studies, but that is impossible. I follow as many as I can, and find it an admirable discipline for the mind, just that discipline which is denied to women. Why do you look at me so strangely? Why do you laugh? I assure you I mean what I say."

"If I must not laugh, pray teach me some more philosophical way of expressing my feelings," said Edgar, "I fear I should laugh still more if you did me the honour to select me as one of your instructors. A year hence when I have been well trained by Phil, I may have a little more confidence in myself."

"If you mean," said Lady Mary, somewhat offended, "that instructing others is the best way to confirm your own knowledge, I am sure you are quite right; but if you mean to laugh at my scheme—"

"Pray pardon me," said Edgar, "I can't help it. The idea of teaching you is too much for my gravity. Tell me who the other learned pundits are from whom Lady Mary Tottenham learns—"

"Lady Mary Tottenham would learn from any man who had anything to teach her," she answered with momentary anger; then added with a short laugh, extorted from her against her will, "Mr. Earnshaw, you are very impertinent and unkind; why should you laugh at one's endeavour to help one's fellow-creatures to a little instruction, and one's self—"

"Are you quarrelling?" said Mr. Tottenham, stalking in suddenly, with his glass in his eye. "What is the matter? Earnshaw, I want to interest you in a very pet scheme of mine. When my wife has

done with you, let me have a hearing. I want him to drive in with me to Tottenham's, Mary, and see what is doing there."

"I hope Mr. Earnshaw will be kinder to you than he has been to me," said Lady Mary; "at me he does nothing but laugh. He despises women, I suppose, like so many other men, and thinks us beneath the range of intellectual beings."

"What a cruel judgment," said Edgar, "because I am tickled beyond measure at the thought of having anything to teach you, and at the suggestion that you can improve your mind by attending lectures, and are undergoing mental discipline by means of mathematics and history—"

"Oh, then it is only that you think me too old;" said Lady Mary, with the not unagreeable amusement of a pretty woman who knows herself to be not old, and to look still younger and fresher than she feels; and they had an amiable laugh over this excellent joke, which entirely restored

the friendly relations between them. Mr. Tottenham smiled reflectively with his glass in his eye, not looking into the matter. He was too seriously occupied with his own affairs to enter into any unnecessary merriment.

"Come along, Earnshaw," he said, "I want you to come into Tottenham's with me, and on the way I will tell you all about my scheme, which my wife takes a great interest in also. You will come to the next evening, Mary? It is always so much more successful when you are there."

"Surely," said Lady Mary with a vague smile, as she gathered up a bundle of papers which she had produced to show Edgar. She shook her head over them as she turned away. Her husband's schemes she patronized with a gentle interest; but her own occupied her a great deal more warmly as was natural. "You have not half given me the consideration my plan deserves," she said half pathetically, "but

don't think I mean to let you off on that account," and with a friendly smile to both the gentlemen she went to her own concerns. The library had been the scene of the conversation, and Lady Mary now withdrew to her own special table, which was placed in front of a great bay-window overlooking the flower-garden. It was a very large room, and Mr. Tottenham's table had a less favourable aspect, with nothing visible but dark shrubberies from the window behind him, to which he judiciously turned his back.

"Mary prefers to look out, and I to look in," he said; "to be sure I have her to look at which makes a difference."

This huge room was the centre of their morning occupations, and the scene of many an amiable controversy. The two tables which belonged to the pair individually were both covered with papers, that of Lady Mary being the most orderly, but not the least crowded, while a third large table, in front of the fire, covered

with books and newspapers, offered scope for any visitor who might chance to join them in their viewy and speculative seclusion. As a matter of fact, most people who came to Tottenham's, gravitated sooner or later towards this room. It was the point of meeting in the morning, just as the palm-tree in the conservatory was the centre of interest in the afternoon.

"I am writing to Lyons to come to my next evening," said Mr. Tottenham, taking his place at his own table, while Lady Mary with her back towards the other occupants of the room scribbled rapidly at hers.

"Do you think they will care for Lyons?" asked Lady Mary without turning round, "you forget always that amusement and not information is what they want—"

"Amusement is what we all want, my dear," said her husband, with apologetic mildness. "We approach the subject in different ways. You call in the same man to instruct as I do to amuse. We agree

as to the man, but we don't agree as to the object; and yet it comes to the very same thing at last."

"You think so," said Lady Mary, still with her back turned; "but we shall see by the results."

"Yes, Lyons is coming," said Mr. Tottenham. "I don't know if you have heard him, Earnshaw. He has been in Africa, and all over the world. My own opinion is that he is rather a stupid fellow; but, so long as other people don't think so, what does that matter? He is coming; and, my dear fellow, if you would listen to what I am going to tell you, and take an interest in my people—"

"What would happen?" said Edgar, as the other paused. He was half amused and half alarmed by the turn that things were taking, and did not know what strange use he might be put to next.

"Ah, I don't know what might not happen," said Mr. Tottenham, yielding for a moment to the influence of Edgar's

distressed but humorous countenance. "However, don't be frightened. You shall not be forced to do anything. I don't approve of over-persuasion. But supposing that you should be interested, as I expect, a great deal more than you think—"

This he said in a deprecatory, propitiatory way, looking up suddenly from the letter he was writing. Edgar stood in front of the fire, contemplating both parties, and he was half touched as well as more than half amused by this look. He did not even know what it was he was called upon to interest himself in; but the eagerness of his companions, about their several plans, went to his heart.

"You may be sure, if there is anything I can do—" he said, impulsively.

"You should not allow Mr. Earnshaw to commit himself till he has seen what it is," said Lady Mary, from the opposite table; and then she, too, turned half round, pen in hand, and fixed an earnest

gaze upon him. "I may write to my people, and tell them the German class will be resumed next week?" she said, with much the same entreating look as her husband had put on. It was all Edgar could do to preserve his gravity, and not reply with indecorous gaiety, like that which had provoked her before; for Lady Mary, on this point at least, was less tolerant and more easily affronted than her husband.

"If you think I can be of any use," he said, trying to look as serious as possible; and thus, before he knew, the double bargain was made.

It would be impossible to describe in words the whimsical unreality of the situation in which Edgar thus found himself when he got into Mr. Tottenham's phaeton to be driven back to town, in order to be made acquainted with the other "Tottenham's." Only a few days had passed since the wintry evening when he arrived a stranger at the hospitable but unknown

house. He was a stranger still according to all rules, but yet his life had suddenly become entangled with the lives which a week ago he had never heard of. He was no visitor, but a member of the family, with distinct duties in it; involved even in its eccentricities, its peculiarities, its quaint benevolences. Edgar felt his head swim as they drove from the door which he had entered for the first time so very short a while ago. Was he in a dream? or had he gone astray out of the ordinary workday world into some modern version of the Arabian Nights?

"You remember what I told you, Earnshaw, about the shop?" said his companion. "It is for the shop that I bespeak your interest now. I told you that my wife had no false pride on the subject, and how she cured me of my absurdity. I draw a great deal of money out of it, and I employ a great number of people. Of course, I have a great responsibility towards these people. If they were la-

bourers on an estate, or miners in a coal-pit, everybody would acknowledge this responsibility; but being only shopmen and shopwomen, or, poor souls, as they prefer to have it, assistants in a house of business, the difficulty is much increased. Do I have your attention, Earnshaw?"

"I am listening," said Edgar; "but you must excuse me if my attention seems to wander a little. Consider how short an acquaintance ours is, and that I am somewhat giddy with the strange turn my life has taken. Pure selfishness, of course; but one does rank more highly than is fit in one's own thoughts."

"To be sure, it is all novel and strange," said Mr. Tottenham, in a soothing and consolatory tone. "Never mind; you will soon get used to our ways. For my own part, I think a spinning mill is nothing to my shop. Several hundreds of decently dressed human creatures, some of the young women looking wonderfully like ladies, I can tell you, is a very bewil-

dering sort of kingdom to deal with. The Queen rules in a vague sort of way compared to me. She has nothing to do with our private morals or manners; so long as we don't rob or steal, she leaves us to our own guidance. But, in my dominions, there is all the minuteness of despotism. My subjects live in my house, eat my bread, and have to be regulated by my pleasure. I look after them in everything, their religious sentiments, their prudential arrangements, their amusements. You don't listen to me, Earnshaw."

"Oh, yes, I do. But if Phil's lessons and Lady Mary's lectures come in to disturb my attention, you won't mind just at first? This is the same road we drove down on Saturday. There is the same woman standing at the same door."

"And here are the same horses, and the same man with the same sentiments driving you."

"Thanks; you are very kind," said Edgar, gratefully; "but my head goes

round notwithstanding. I suppose so many ups and downs put one off one's balance. I promise you to wake up when we come to the field of battle."

"You mean the shop," said Mr. Tottenham; "don't be afraid of naming it. I am rather excited, to tell the truth, about the effect it may have upon you. I am like a showman, with something quite original and out of the common to show."

CHAPTER II.

THE SHOP.

TOTTENHAM'S is situated in one of the great thoroughfares which lead out of the heart of London, towards one of its huge suburbs. It consists of an immense square pile of building, facing to four different streets, with frontage of plate-glass windows, and masses of costly shawls and silks appearing through. To many people, but these were mostly ladies, Tottenham's was a kind of fairyland. It represented everything, from substantial domestic linen to fairy webs of lace, which money could buy. In the latter particular, it is true, Tottenham's was limited;

it possessed only the productions of modern fingers, the filmy fabrics of Flanders and France; but its silks, its velvets, its magnificences of shawl and drapery, its untold wealth in the homelier shape of linen and cambric, were unsurpassed anywhere, and the fame of them had spread throughout London, nay, throughout England. The name of this great establishment caused a flutter of feeling through all the Home Counties, and up even to the Northern borders. People sent their orders to Tottenham's from every direction of the compass. The mass of its clients were, perhaps, not highly fashionable, though even the *crême de la crême* sometimes made a raid into the vast place, which was reported cheap, and where fashionable mothers were apt to assure each other that people, who knew what was what, might often pick up very nice things indeed at half the price which Élise would ask, not to speak of Worth. Persons who know what Worth has last invented, and how Élise works,

have an immense advantage in this way over their humble neighbours. But the humble neighbours themselves were very good customers, and bought more largely, if with less discrimination. And the middle class, like one man, or rather like one woman, patronized Tottenham's. It bought its gowns there, and its carpets, and its thread and needles, everything that is wanted in a house. It provided its daughters' *trousseaux*, and furnished its sons' houses out of this universal emporium; not the chairs and tables, it is true, but everything else. The arrangements of the interior were so vast and bewildering as to drive a stranger wild, though the *habitués* glided about from counter to counter with smiling readiness. There were as many departments as in the Home Office, but everybody looked after his own department, which is not generally the case in the Imperial shop; and the hum of voices, the gliding about of many feet, the rustle of many garments, the vague sound and

sentiment of a multitude pervaded the alleys of counters, the crowded passages between, where group was jostled by group, and not an inch of space left unoccupied.

Edgar's entrance into this curious unexplored world, which he had been brought here expressly to "take an interest" in, was made through a private way, through the counting-house, where many clerks sat at their desks, and where all was quiet and still as in a well-ordered merchant's office. Mr. Tottenham had a large room, furnished with the morocco-covered chairs and writing-tables consecrated to such places, but with more luxury than usual; with Turkey carpets on the floor, and rich crimson curtains framing the great window, which looked into a small court-yard surrounded with blank walls. Here Mr. Tottenham paused to look over a bundle of business letters, and to hear some reports that were brought to him by the heads of departments. These were not entirely

about business. Though the communications were made in a low voice, Edgar could not help hearing that Mr. So-and-So was in question here, and Miss Somebody there.

"If something is not done, I don't think the other young ladies will stand it, Sir," said a grave elderly gentleman, whom Edgar, eyeing him curiously, felt that he would have taken at least for a Member of Parliament.

"I will look into it, Robinson. You may make your mind quite easy. I will certainly look into it," said Mr. Tottenham, with such a look as the Chancellor of the Exchequer may put on when he anticipates a failure in the revenue,

"You see, Sir," added Mr. Robinson, "a piece of scandal about any of the young ladies is bad enough; but when it comes to be the head of a department, or at least, one of the heads—and you remember it was all our opinions that Miss Lockwood was just the fit person for the place. I had a little difficulty myself on the point,

for Miss Innes had been longer in the establishment; but as for being ladylike-looking, and a good figure, and a good manner, there could, of course, be no comparison."

"I will look into it, I will look into it," said Mr. Tottenham, hurriedly.

The head of a State has to bear many worries, in small things as well as in great; and the head of Tottenham's was less a constitutional than a despotic ruler. Limited Monarchies do not answer, it must be allowed, on a small scale. The respectable Mr. Robinson withdrew to one side, while other heads of departments approached the Sultan of the Shop. Edgar looked on with some amusement and a good deal of interest. Mr. Tottenham was no longer speculative and viewy. He went into all the business details with a precision which surprised his companion, and talked of the rise in silks, and the vicissitudes in shirtings, with very much more apparent perception of the serious-

ness of the matter than he had ever evidenced in the other Tottenham's, the wealthy house in which the shop-keeper lived as princes live. Edgar would have retired when these business discussions, or rather reports and audiences, began; but Mr. Tottenham restrained him with a quick look and gesture, motioning him to a seat close to his own.

"I want you to see what I have to do," he said in a rapid interjection between one conference and another.

The last of all was a young man, studiously elegant in appearance, and in reality, as Edgar found out afterwards, the fine gentleman of the establishment, who had charge of the recreations of "the assistants," or rather the *employés*, which was the word Mr. Watson preferred. Mr. Tottenham's face lighted up when this functionary approached him with a piece of paper, written in irregular lines, like a programme, in his hand—and it was the programme of the next evening enter-

tainment, to be given in the shop and for the shop. Mr. Watson used no such vulgar phraseology.

"Perhaps, Sir, you will kindly look over this, and favour us with any hint you may think necessary?" he said. "Music is always popular, and as we have at present a good deal of vocal talent among us, I thought it best to utilize it. The part-songs please the young ladies, Sir. It is the only portion of the entertainment in which they can take any active share."

"Then by all means let us please the ladies," said Mr. Tottenham. "Look, Earnshaw; this is an entertainment which we have once a month. Ah, Watson, you are down, I see, for a solo on your instrument?"

"I find it popular, Sir," said Mr. Watson, with a smirk. "The taste for music is spreading. The young ladies, Sir, are anxious to know whether, as you once were good enough to promise, her

Ladyship is likely this time to do us the honour—"

"Oh, yes, Watson; you may consider that settled; my wife is coming," said Mr. Tottenham. "Trial Scene in Pickwick? Yes; very well, very well. Duet, Mr. Watson and Miss Lockwood. Ah! I have been just hearing something about Miss Lockwood—"

"She has enemies, Sir," said Mr. Watson, flushing all over. He was a fair young man, and the colour showed at once in his somewhat pallid complexion. "In an establishment like this, Sir—a little world—where there are so many *employés*, of course, she has her enemies."

"That may be," said Mr. Tottenham, musing. "I have not inquired into it yet; but in the meantime, if there is any latent scandal, wouldn't it be better that she took no public part?"

"Oh, of course, Sir!" cried Watson, bundling up his papers; "if she is to be condemned unheard—"

Robinson, the respectable Member of Parliament, approached anxiously at this.

"I assure you, Mr. Tottenham," he cried, with a warmth of sincerity which appeared to come from the bottom of his heart, "I don't want to judge Miss Lockwood, or any other young lady in the establishment; but when things come to my ears, I can't but take notice of them. The other young ladies have a right to be considered."

"It is jealousy, Sir; nothing but jealousy!" cried Watson; "because she's a deal more attractive than any of 'em, and gets more attention—"

"Softly, softly," said Mr. Tottenham. "This grows serious. I don't think I am apt to be moved by jealousy of Miss Lockwood, eh, Watson? You may go now, and if you know anything about the subject, I'll see you afterwards."

"I know as she's the best saleswoman, and the most ladylike-looking young lady in the house," cried Watson; and then he

perceived his slip of grammar, and blushed hotter than ever; for he was an ambitious young man, and had been instructed up to the point of knowing that his native English stood in need of improvement, and that bad grammar was against his rising in life.

"That will do then; you can go," said Mr. Tottenham. "Opinion is not evidence. Come, Robinson, if it's making a feud in the house, I had better, I suppose, go into it at once."

"And I, perhaps, had better withdraw too," said Edgar, whom this strange and sudden revelation of human tumults going on in the great house of business had interested in spite of himself.

"Stay; you are impartial, and have an unbiassed judgment," said Mr. Tottenham. "Now, Robinson, let us hear what you have got to say."

Robinson approached with a world of care upon his face. Edgar having allowed his fancy to be taken possession of by the

Member-of-Parliament theory, could not help the notion that this good worried man had risen to call for a Committee upon some subject involving peril to the nation, some mysterious eruption of Jesuits or Internationalists, or Foreign Office squabble. He was only the head of the shawl and cloak department in Tottenham's; but it is quite marvellous how much humanity resembles itself, though the circumstances were so unlike.

Mr. Robinson had not much more than begun his story. He was in the preamble, discoursing, as his prototype in the House of Commons would have done, upon the general danger to society which was involved in carelessness and negligence of one such matter as that he was about to bring before the House—when a tap was heard at the door, a little sharp tap, half defiant, half coquettish, sounding as if the applicant, while impatient for admittance, might turn away capriciously, when the door was opened. Both the

judge and the prosecutor evidently divined at once who it was.

"Come in," said Mr. Tottenham; "Come in!" for the summons was not immediately obeyed.

Then there entered a—person, to use the safe yet not very respectful word which Mr. J. S. Mill rescued from the hands of flunkeys and policemen—a female figure, to speak more romantically, clad in elegant black silken robes, very well made, with dark hair elaborately dressed; tall, slight, graceful, one of those beings to be met with everywhere in the inner recesses of great shops like Tottenham's, bearing all the outward aspect of ladies, moving about all day long upon rich carpets, in a warm luxurious atmosphere, "trying on" one beautiful garment after another, and surveying themselves in great mirrors as they pass and repass. The best of feminine society ebbs and flows around these soft-voiced and elegant creatures—duchesses, princesses, who look like washer-

women beside them, and young girls often not more pretty or graceful. They are the Helots of the female fashionable world, and, at the same time, to some degree, its despots; for does not many a dumpy woman appear ridiculous in the elegant garb which was proved before her eyes so beautiful and becoming upon the slim straight form of the "young person" who exhibited and sold it?

Miss Lockwood entered, with her head well up, in one of the attitudes which are considered most elegant in those pretty coloured pictures of the "Modes," which, to her class of young ladies, are as the Louvre and the National Gallery thrown into one. She was no longer, except from a professional point of view, to be considered absolutely as a "young lady." Her face, which was a handsome face, was slightly worn, and her age must have been a year or two over thirty; but, as her accuser admitted, and as her defender asserted, a more "ladylike-looking" person, or a

better figure for showing off shawl or mantle had never been seen in Tottenham's or any other house of business. This was her great quality. She came in with a little sweep and rustle of her long black silken train; her dress, like her figure, was her stock-in-trade.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said in an abrupt yet airy tone, angry yet sensible withal of those personal advantages which made it something of a joke that anyone should presume to find fault with her. "I hear my character is being taken away behind my back, and I have come, please, to defend myself."

Edgar looked at this kind of being, which was new to him, with a mixture of feelings. She had the dress and appearance of a lady, and she was unquestionably a woman, though she would have scorned so common a name. He rose from his seat when she came in with the intention of getting a chair for her, as he would have done to any other lady, but

was deterred, he could scarcely tell why, by her own air and that of the other two men who looked at her without budging.

"Sit down, sit down," said Mr. Tottenham hastily, aside to him, "of course I know what you mean, but that sort of thing does not do. It makes them uncomfortable; sit down; she will give us trouble enough, you will see."

Edgar, however, could not go so far as to obey. He kept standing, and he saw the new comer look at him, and look again with a lighting up of her face as though she recognised him. So far as he was aware he had never seen her before in his life.

"Miss Lockwood, I do not think this is how you should speak," said her employer, "you know whether I am in the habit of permitting anybody's character to be taken away, without giving the accused full opportunity to defend themselves."

"Oh, yes, Sir, to defend themselves," she said with a toss of her head, "after all the harm's done, and things has been said that can't be unsaid. You know as well as I do, Sir, it's all up with a young lady the moment things has been spoke of publicly against her."

"I hope not so bad as that," said Mr. Tottenham mildly. He was a little afraid of the young lady, and so was the worthy parliamentary Robinson, who had withdrawn a step behind backs, when interrupted in his speech.

"Well, Mr. Tottenham! and what does it mean, Sir, when you put a stop to my duet, me and Mr. Watson's duet, and say it's best I should't take part publicly? Isn't that judging me, Sir, before ever hearing me—and taking all the stories as is told against me for true?"

"I know none of the stories yet," said Mr. Tottenham, "pray compose yourself. Mr. Robinson was going to explain to me; but as you are here, if it will at all save

your feelings, I am quite ready to hear your story first."

"Mr. Tottenham, Sir!" said Mr. Robinson, roused to speech.

"Well! you can have no motive, and I can have no motive, but to come to the truth. Take a seat, Miss Lockwood, I will not keep you standing; and begin—"

"Begin what?" the young woman faltered. "Oh, I am not going to be the one to begin," she said saucily, "nobody's obliged to criminate himself. And how can I tell what my enemies are saying against me? They must speak first."

"Then, Robinson, do you begin," said the master; but it was easier in this case to command than to obey. Robinson shifted from one foot to the other, he cleared his throat, he rubbed his hands. "I don't know that I can, before her," he said hoarsely, "I have daughters of my own."

"I knew," said the culprit in triumphant scorn, "that you daren't make up any of your stories before my face!"

Robinson restrained himself with an effort. He was a good man, though the fuss of the incipient scandal was not disagreeable to him. "It's—it's about what is past, Sir," he said hurriedly, "there is no reflection on Miss Lockwood's conduct now. I'd rather not bring it all up here, not before strangers."

"You may speak before as many strangers as you please, I shan't mind," said the accused, giving Edgar a glance which bewildered him, not so much for the recognition which was in it, as for a certain confidence and support which his appearance seemed to give her. Mr. Tottenham drew him aside for a moment, whispering in his ear.

"She seems to know you, Earnshaw?"

"Yes; but I don't know how. I never saw her before."

"I wonder—perhaps, if I were to take Robinson away and hear his story—while you might hear what she has to say?"

"I? But indeed I don't know her, I

assure you I have never seen her before," said Edgar in dismay.

"Never mind, she knows you. She is just the sort of person to prefer to confide in one whom she does not see every day. I'll leave you with her, Earnshaw. Perhaps it will be best if you step this way, Robinson; I shall hear what you have to say here."

Robinson followed his superior promptly into a smaller room. Edgar was left with the culprit; and it is scarcely possible to realize a less comfortable position. What was he to do with her? He was not acquainted either with her or her class; he did not know how to address her. She looked like a lady, but yet was not a lady, and for the present moment she was on her trial. Was he to laugh, as he felt inclined to do, at the shabby trick his friend had played him, or was he to proceed gravely with his mission? Miss Lockwood solved this question for herself.

CHAPTER III.

TWO CULPRITS ON THEIR TRIAL.

"YOU'RE surprised, Sir, that a stranger should be so ready to speak up to you," said Miss Lockwood, "you don't know me from Adam? but I know you. You are the gentleman that was in the great Arden case, the gentleman as gave up. You wouldn't think it, but I am mixed up with the Ardens too; and as soon as I set eyes upon you, I said to myself, 'Here is one that will help me to my rights.'"

"Have you, too, rights that involve the Ardens?" said Edgar, startled yet half amused. "Alas, I fear I cannot help you. If you know my story you must know I am no Arden, and have no influence

with the family one way or another."

"You mightn't have influence, Sir, but you might hate 'em—as I do," she said, with a gleam in her eyes which changed the character of her otherwise commonplace though handsome countenance.

"Hate them!" cried Edgar, still more startled. "Why, this is a tragical way of approaching the subject. What have the Ardens done to you that you should hate them?"

"That's my story," said Miss Lockwood, meeting him full with a steadfast look in her eyes, which bewildered Edgar still more. She had taken a seat, and the two sat looking at each other across Mr. Tottenham's writing table. Edgar had not even heard the name of Arden for years past, and nothing was further from his thoughts on entering this most commonplace of scenes, the great shop, than to be thrown back into his own past life, by the touch of one of the young ladies in the shawl and mantle department. His curiosity was awakened, but not in

any high degree, for it was absurd to suppose that a shopwoman in Tottenham's could have any power to affect the Ardens one way or another. He felt that this must be a tempest in a teacup, some trifling supposed injustice, something, perhaps, about a cottage on the estate, or the rancour of a dismissed servant; for he had heard vaguely that there had been considerable changes.

"I am afraid I cannot sympathize with you in hating the Ardens," he said; "if you know so much about me, you must know that I was brought up to regard Mrs. Arden as my sister, which I still do, notwithstanding the change of circumstances; and no one connected with her can be to me an object of hate."

"*Mrs.* Arden, indeed!" said Miss Lockwood with contemptuous emphasis, tossing her handsome head.

"Yes. What has Mrs. Arden done to you?" said Edgar, half angry, half amused with what seemed to him the impotent spitefulness; the absurdity of the wo-

man's scorn struck him with ludicrous effect; and yet a certain uneasiness was in the puzzle. Clare Arden had never possessed that natural instinctive courtesy which makes dependents friends. Probably she had wounded the *amour propre* of the shopwoman; but then no doubt shopwomen have to make up their minds to such wounds, and Mrs. Arden was much too well bred and much too proud to have gone out of her way to annoy a young lady at Tottenham's—any offence given or taken must have been a mere inadvertence, whatever it was.

"Done to me? Oh, she haven't done nothing to me, not meaningly, poor creature," said Miss Lockwood. "Poor thing! it's me that has that in my power, not her."

"I wish you would tell me," said Edgar seriously, leaning across the table towards her with deepened interest and a certain alarm, "I entreat you to tell me what you mean. You are right in thinking that no subject could be more interesting to me."

"Ah! but it ain't, perhaps, the kind of interest I expected," said Miss Lockwood with coquettish familiarity, pushing back her chair. She belonged to the class of women who delight to make any conversation, however trivial or however important, bear the air of a flirtation. She was quite ready to play with her present companion, to excite and tantalize his curiosity, to laugh at him, and delude him, if fortune favoured her. But a chance altogether unforeseen interrupted this not unpleasant operation, and threw Miss Lockwood and her mystery into the shade. When the conversation had advanced thus far, a new personage suddenly appeared on the scene. With a little preliminary knock, but without waiting for any invitation, a lady opened the door, the sight of whom drove even Clare Arden out of Edgar's mind. She was no longer young, and her days of possible beauty were over. At sight of her Edgar rose to his feet, with a sudden cry.

For a moment the new-comer stood still at the door, looking at the unexpected

scene. Her face was care-worn, and yet it was kind, revealing one of those mixtures of two beings which are to be seen so often in society—the kind, genial, gentle woman made by nature, with the conventional great lady, formed for her position, and earnestly striving as her highest duty to shape herself into the narrowness and worldliness which it demanded. This curious development of mingled good and evil has not, perhaps, had so much notice as it deserves from the observer. We are all acquainted with characters in which a little germ of goodness strives against natural dispositions which are not amiable; but the other compound is not less true, if perhaps more rare. Lady Augusta Thornleigh, who was Lady Mary Tottenham's sister, was born one of the kindest souls that ever drew breath. She had it in her even to be "viewy" as Lady Mary was, or to be sentimentally yielding and eager for everybody's happiness. But all her canons of

duty bound her to regard these dispositions as weakness, almost as guilt, and represented worldliness to her as the highest of virtues. She sighed after this as the others sigh after the higher heights of self-denial. Her searchings of heart were all directed (unconsciously) to make the worse appear the better cause; she tried to be worldly, believing that was right, as other people try to be unworldly. But I do wrong to keep Lady Augusta standing at the door of Mr. Tottenham's room, while I describe her characteristics to the reader. She came in, calmly unexpectant of any sight but that of her brother-in-law; then starting to see two people, man and woman, seated on either side of the table with every appearance of being engaged in interesting conversation, made a step back again, bewildered.

"I beg your pardon, I thought Mr. Tottenham was here," she said, dropping her veil, which she had raised on entering. Miss Lockwood sprang up from her chair

which she pushed back with an appearance of flurry and excitement, which was either real or very well counterfeited; while Edgar, deeply vexed, he could scarcely have told why, to be found thus, rose too, and approached his old friend. He would have liked to put himself at her feet, to kiss her hand, to throw himself upon her old kindness, if not like a son with a mother, at least like a loyal servant of one of those queens of nature whom generous men love to serve like sons. But he dared not do this—he dared not exceed the bounds of conventional acquaintance. He went forward eagerly but timidly, holding out his hands. I cannot find words to say how bewildered Lady Augusta was by the sight of Edgar, or with what consternation she recognised him. Whatever the motive had been which had drawn to him the attention of the Tottenhams, Lady Augusta Thornleigh was altogether ignorant of it. She had no expectation of seeing him, no idea

that he could cross her path again. The profound surprise, the rush of kindly feeling which the first sight of him called forth, the thrill of terror and sense of danger which accompanied it, made her tremble with sudden agitation. Good heavens! what was she to do? She could not decline to recognise him; her heart indeed yearned to him, the subject of so much misfortune; but all the new complications that his presence would produce, rose up before her as he approached and made her heart sick. Oh, if he would only take the hint given in her hesitating look, and the veil which she had dropped over her face! But Edgar was fond of his old friend. She was the sister of his hostess, and he had felt ever since he went to Tottenham's that one day or other he must meet her. He tried even at that moment to forget that she was anything beyond an old friend and Lady Mary's sister; he tried to put the thought out of his mind that she was the mother of Gussy, his

only love; he tried to forget the former relations between them. He had not seen her since the day when, leaving his former home, a nameless being, without either future or past to console him, he had been touched to the heart by her hurried farewell. He was then in all the excitement of a great sacrifice; he was a hero, admired and pitied everywhere; he had been almost her son, and she had called him Edgar, and wept over him. What a difference! he was a stranger now, in a totally different sphere, fallen out of knowledge, out of sympathy, no longer a hero or representing any exciting break in the ordinary level of life; but a common man probably desirous of asking some favour, and one for whom all his former friends must have the troublesome sensation of feeling, something ought to be done for—I do not know if this occurred to Edgar's mind, who was little apt to make such claims, but it did occur to Lady Augusta.

"Is it you?—Mr.——?" she said faltering. She was not even sure of his new name.

"Earnshaw," he said; "Edgar Earnshaw; you recollect me even after all these years?"

"Oh, surely. Of course I cannot but recollect you," she said; "but I am taken by surprise. I did not know you were in England. I never could have expected to find you here."

"No," said Edgar, chilled by her tone, and letting the hand drop which she had given him, he felt, with hesitation. "It seems to myself the last place in the world where I could be; but Mr. Tottenham is so kind as to wish—"

What was Mr. Tottenham so kind as to wish? I cannot describe Lady Augusta's perplexity. Did it mean that Edgar had been so far reduced as to require employment in the shop? Had he come to that—he who was all but engaged to Gussy once? The idea gave her an indescribable

shock; but then, how foolish of Mr. Tottenham, knowing all he did of Gussy and her obstinacy, and how she had all but broken her parents' hearts by refusing the best of offers, and threatened to go into a sisterhood, and came constantly to this very place to visit and influence the "young ladies" of the establishment! Lady Augusta grew red and grew pale in the agitation of her feelings; but what could she say? She could not ask him point-blank if this were so; she could not, after all these years, throw herself once more upon his chivalry, as she had done before, and implore him to keep out of her daughter's way. The only way of outlet she found for her excitement and confusion was to look severely at Miss Lockwood, who stood with her hands folded, and an ingratiating smile on her face, stooping slightly forward, as who should say, What can I have the pleasure of showing your ladyship?

Lady Augusta gave this "person" a

withering glance. She was indignant with her for appearing to be on intimate terms with this man, whom, had Lady Augusta been wise, she would have gladly married off at once to anybody, so that he might be got out of her child's way. But, being a very natural woman, with a great many tender prejudices and motherly feelings, she was a little haughty and offended that, having known Gussy, he should decline to such a level as Miss Lockwood. Gussy was not for him, and his very existence was a danger for her; but still, that he should be inconstant to Gussy, was to her mother a wrong and offence.

"I fear," she said, in her stateliest tone, "that I am interrupting you—that you were particularly engaged."

"Oh no, your Ladyship, nothing but what can wait," murmured Miss Lockwood, gliding off with a curtsey, and adding a sidelong half nod of leave-taking to Edgar, which made him hot with anger, yet was too absurd in its impertinence to be re-

sented. Lady Augusta drew herself up more and more.

"I can't tell you how sorry I am to have interrupted a—conversation—an interview. I expected to find my brother-in-law here."

"Indeed, you have interrupted nothing," said Edgar. "Mr. Tottenham, I don't know why, left me here with this—lady, while he went to make some inquiries about her; he will return directly. She had offered to explain her case, of which I knew nothing, to me," he continued, with an embarrassed laugh, feeling himself grow red against his will. What did it matter to Lady Augusta whom he might converse with? But, notwithstanding, her manner was as that of a woman offended, and forming an unfavourable judgment, and Edgar was affected by this unspoken judgment in spite of himself.

Then a pause ensued. Miss Lockwood had glided out of the room with her long train rustling, but no other sound, and

Lady Augusta, like other less exalted persons, did not know what to say to carry on this curious conversation. She was not sufficiently in friendship with Edgar to say anything further to him on this subject, either as warning or reproving, and there was an awkward pause. He would have liked to put a hundred questions, but did not know how to begin.

"I hope all are well," he said at last, with some timidity.

"Oh, quite well. There have been various changes in the family, as no doubt you have heard; and more are in prospect," Lady Augusta said pointedly: "That is the worst of grown-up sons and daughters. After twenty, their father and mother have very little enjoyment of them. I was not aware you knew my brother-in-law."

This she said with something of a jerk, having forestalled all possible inquiry on Edgar's side, as she thought.

"I only met him a few days ago," said Edgar. "Perhaps I had better tell you at once my position in respect to him. He has offered me the post of tutor to his boy; and having nothing to do for the moment, poor as my qualifications are, I have accepted it. I need not tell you, who know them, how kind to me both he and Lady Mary have been."

"Tutor to—his boy!" Lady Augusta repeated the words, thunderstruck. This was something more terrible, more alarming than she had conceived possible. "Tutor to Phil?" She did not seem able to do more than repeat the words.

"You may well be surprised," said Edgar, trying to laugh; "no one could be more so than myself; but as they were so good as to overlook my deficiencies, what could I say?"

"I was not thinking of your deficiencies. Oh! Mr. Earnshaw, oh! Edgar, could not your old friends have helped you to something better than this?"

Poor Lady Augusta! she was unfeignedly grieved and sorry to think of him as a dependant. And at the same time she was struck with terror unbounded to think that he would now be always in her way, in Gussy's way, never to be got rid of. She was not fond of exercising what influence she possessed lavishly, for she had many sons and nephews; but she began to reflect immediately what she could do to promote Edgar's interests. A tutor, and in Tottenham's, for ever; or in Berkeley Square, always at hand, never to be got rid of—

"Dear me!" she cried, "tell me whom I should speak to. We must not let you vegetate in such a post as this."

I don't think Edgar had much difficulty in divining what she meant, or which branch of the subject had most effect on her mind. And, perhaps, he was slightly irritated by his insight, though this effect very soon went off.

"Thank you," he said, "for the moment

I am well enough pleased with my position. Everybody is very kind to me; and, after so long abstinence, a little pleasant society is an agreeable change."

He was sorry after he had said this, for he liked Lady Augusta. Her countenance fell. She gave an alarmed glance at the door, where there was a passing sound as of some one approaching.

"I should not have thought you would have liked it," she said, with a little sigh. "Do you know where Mr. Tottenham is? I want to speak to him just for a moment. Thanks so much. I will wait here till he comes."

"I shall attend to it—you may be sure I will attend to it," said Mr. Tottenham's voice, making itself audible before he himself appeared. "You were quite right, Robinson, quite right, and you may be sure I will pay every attention. Ah, Lady Augusta, you here. What! and you have found out our friend? I meant that for a little surprise to you. Yes, here he is, and

I hope to hold him fast, at least till something very much better turns up—a thing which will happen, I am afraid, quite too soon for us."

"Let us hope so, for Mr. Earnshaw's sake," said Lady Augusta, with a little solemnity. How different her tone was from that of her brother-in-law! Perhaps, on the whole, her personal liking for Edgar was stronger than his was; but there were so many things mingled with it which made this liking impossible. Her very person seemed to stiffen as she spoke, and she made a little pause, as Lord Newmarch had done before pronouncing his name. "Mr.—Earnshaw." To be sure it must be difficult, having known him by one name to speak to him by another; but somehow this little pause seemed to Edgar another painful reminder that he was not as he had once been.

And then there ensued another embarrassed pause. Edgar could not say anything, for his feelings at the moment were

somewhat bitter; and as for good Mr. Tottenham, he was perplexed and perturbed, not perceiving any reason why his sister-in-law should put on so solemn an expression. He had expected nothing less than to please her and all her family, by his kindness to the man whom he persisted in considering their friend. He was profoundly perplexed by this stiffness and air of solemnity. Had there been some quarrel, of which he knew nothing, between them? He was dumb in his bewilderment, and could not think of anything to say.

"Did Miss Lockwood tell you much? or was she frightened?" he said. "It is a troublesome story, and I wish people would not be so horribly officious in reporting everything. Did she open her heart at all to you?"

Mr. Tottenham looked at him with calm matter-of-fact seriousness, and Lady Augusta looked at him with suspicious disapproval. To the woman of the world

the question seemed absurd, to the man of ideas it was as simple as daylight; between them they embarrassed the altogether innocent third party, who had a clue to both their thoughts.

"She told me nothing," said Edgar, "as indeed how should she, never having spoken to me before to-day? She had seen me, she says, three years ago, at the time of the arrangement about Arden, and she chose to talk to me of that, heaven knows why."

"Was that what you were talking about when I came in?" said Lady Augusta, with a cold ring of unbelief in her tone, a tone which irritated Edgar deeply in spite of himself.

"It was what we were talking of," he said, concisely; and then Mr. Tottenham felt sure there had been some previously existing quarrel of which he knew nothing, and that his attempt to give pleasure had been so far a failure. This momentarily discouraged him—for to do harm, where

you would fain have done good, is confusing to every well-intentioned soul.

"Mary will be glad to hear something of your movements," he said. "She has been anxious for some time past to know what you were going to do."

"I came to tell you," said Lady Augusta. "We are in town for a few weeks, chiefly about business, for my little Mary has made up her mind to leave me; and as it has all been made up in a hurry, there will be a great deal to do."

"Made up her mind to leave you?"

"Yes, don't you understand? She is going to marry Lord Granton, the Marquis of Hautville's son. Yes, you may congratulate me; it is very pleasant, and just such a match as one could have wished; and after Helena's sad business," said Lady Augusta, with a sigh, "we wanted something to console us a little."

"I think Helena's was a very sensible marriage," said Mr. Tottenham; "just the man for her; but I am glad your pride is

going to have this salve all the same, and I daresay Mary will be delighted, for she is a dreadful little aristocrat, notwithstanding her own foolish marriage, and all she says."

"If every foolish marriage ended as well as Mary's—" said Lady Augusta.

"Ah! you mean if every *parvenu* was rich?" said Mr. Tottenham; "but that, unfortunately, is past hoping for. So you have come to town for the trousseau? I hope your Ladyship means to patronise the shop."

"My dear Tom—" Lady Augusta began, her face clouding over.

"Before your sister's time, I too was ashamed of the shop," he said, "if I am not now, it is Mary's doing. And so her little godchild is to be a great lady! I am very glad for your sake, Augusta, and I hope the little thing will be happy. Does she know her own mind? I suppose Thornleigh is very much pleased."

"Delighted!" cried Lady Augusta,

"as we all are; he is a charming fellow, and she is as happy as the day is long."

"Ah, we are all charming fellows, and everybody makes the best of us at that period of our lives;" said Mr. Tottenham, "all the same I am glad to hear everything is so pleasant. And Gussy? What does Gussy say?"

"Mr. Tottenham!" Lady Augusta cried in an indignant whisper; and then she added, "tell Mary I shall come and tell her all about it. I must not detain you any longer from your business. Goodbye, Mr. Earnshaw."

"Earnshaw will see you to your carriage," said Mr. Tottenham, "I am very busy—don't think me careless; and I know," he added in a lower tone, "you will like, when you are happy yourself, to say a kind word to an old friend."

Happy herself! does a woman ever inquire whether she is personally happy or not when she has come to Lady Augusta's age, and has a large family to

care for? She took the arm which Edgar could not but offer with an impatient sigh.

"Mr Earnshaw does not require to be told that I wish him everything that is good," she said, and allowed him to lead her out, wondering how she should manage to warn Beatrice, her youngest daughter, who had come with her, and who was looking at something in one of the many departments. The young Thornleighs were all fond of Edgar, and Lady Augusta dared not trust a young firebrand of nineteen to go and spread the news all over the family, without due warning, that he had appeared upon the scene again. Edgar's short-lived anger had before this floated away, though his heart ached at the withdrawal from him of the friendship which had been sweet to his friendly soul. His heart melted more and more every step he walked by her side.

"Lady Augusta," he said at last hurriedly, "you were once as kind as an angel to me, when I wanted it much.

Don't be afraid of me; I shall never put myself in your way."

"Oh, Mr. Earnshaw!" she cried, struck by compunction; "I ought to ask your pardon, Edgar; I ought to know you better; don't judge me harshly. If you only knew—"

"I don't ask to know anything," he said, though his heart beat high, "my sphere henceforth is very different from yours; you need have no fear of me."

"God bless you, whatever is your sphere! you are good, and I am sure you will be happy!" she cried with tears in her eyes, giving him her hand as he put her into her carriage; but then she added, "will you send some one to call Beatrice, little Beatrice, who came with me? No, don't go yourself, pray don't go—I would not give you so much trouble for the world!"

Edgar did not feel sure whether he was most inclined to burst into rude laughter, or to go aside to the nearest corner and dry his glistening eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

SCHEMES AND SPECULATIONS.

EDGAR went home in the evening, feeling a degree of agitation which he had scarcely given himself credit for being capable of. He had been on so low a level of feeling all these years, that he believed himself to have grown duller and less capable of emotion, though he could not explain to himself how it should be so. But now the storm-winds had begun to blow, and the tide to rise. The mere sight of Lady Augusta was enough to have brought back a crowd of sensations and recollections, and there had lately been so many other touches upon the past to heighten the effect of this broad gleam of light.

Even the curious recognition of him, and the apparently foolish enmity against the Ardens, which the young lady at Tottenham's had shown, had something to do with the ferment of contending feelings in which he found himself. Hate them! no, why should he hate them? But to be thus called back to the recollection of them, and of all that he had been, had a strangely disturbing influence upon his mind. In his aimless wanderings alone over Europe, and in his sudden plunge into a family life quite new to him in Scotland, he had believed himself utterly set free from all the traditions and associations of the former existence, which was indeed more like a chapter out of a romance than a real episode in life. Taking it at the most, it was nothing but an episode. After years of neglected youth, a brief breathless moment of power, independence, and a kind of greatness, and then a sharp disruption from them all, and plunge into obscurity again. Why should that short

interval affect him more than all the long tracts of less highly coloured life, from which it stood out like a bit of brilliant embroidery on a sombre web? Edgar could not tell; he felt that it did so, but he could not answer to himself why. Mr. Tottenham talked all the way back about one thing and another, about Miss Lockwood, and the scandal which had suddenly shocked the establishment, about little Mary Thornleigh and her brilliant marriage, about the evening entertainment to be given in the shop, which was quite as important to him. Fortunately for Edgar, his companion was capable of monologue, and went on quite pleasantly during their drive without need of anything more than a judicious question or monosyllable of assent.

"I'll tell you one thing, Earnshaw," he said, "in such undertakings as mine the great thing is never to be discouraged; never allow yourself to be discouraged; that is my maxim; though I am not always

able to carry it out. I hope I never shall give in to say that because things go wrong under my management, or because one meets with disappointments—therefore things must always go wrong, and nothing good ever come of it. Of course, look at it from a serious point of view, concerts and penny readings, and so forth are of no importance. That is what Gussy always tells me. She thinks religion is the only thing; she would like to train my young ladies to find their chief pleasure in the chapel and the daily service, like her Sisters in their convent. I am not against Sisterhoods, Earnshaw; I should not like to see Gussy go into one, it is true—"

"Is there any likelihood of that?" Edgar asked with a great start, which made the light waggon they were driving in, swerve.

"Hallo! steady!" cried Mr. Tottenham, "likelihood of it? I don't know. She wished it at one time. You see,

Earnshaw, we don't sufficiently understand, seeing how different they are, how much alike women are to ourselves. I suppose there comes a time in a girl's life, as well as in a man's, when she wants to be herself, and not merely her father's daughter. You may say she should marry in that case; but supposing she doesn't want to marry, or, put the case, can't marry as she would wish? What can she do? I think myself they overdo the devotional part; but a Sisterhood means occupation, a kind of independence, a position of her own—and at the same time protection from all the folly we talk about strong-minded women."

"But does it mean all this?" said Edgar surprised, "that is not the ordinary view?"

"My dear fellow, the ordinary view is all nonsense. I say it's protection against idiotic talk. The last thing anyone thinks of is to bring forward the strong-minded abuse in respect to a Sisterhood.

But look here; I know of one, where quite quietly, without any fuss, there's the Sister Doctor in full practice, looking after as many children as would fill a good-sized village. She's never laughed at and called Dr. Mary, M.D.; and there's the Sister Head-Master, with no Governing Body to make her life miserable. They don't put forward that view of the subject. Possibly, for human nature is very queer, they think only of the sacrifice, &c.; but I don't wonder, for my part, that it's a great temptation to a woman. Gussy Thornleigh is twenty-five, too old to be only her mother's shadow; and if nothing else that she likes comes in her way—"

Mr. Tottenham made a pause. Did he mean anything by that pause? Poor Edgar, who felt himself to be a sport to all the wild imaginations that can torture a man, sat silent, and felt the blood boiling in his veins and his heart leaping in his throat. It was as well that his companion stopped talking, for he could not have heard any

voice but that of his own nerves and pulses all throbbing and thrilling. Heaven and earth! might it be possible that this should come about, while he, a man, able and willing to work, to slave, to turn head and hands to any occupation on the earth, should be hanging on helpless, unable to interfere? And yet he had but this moment told Gussy's mother that she need not fear him! A strong impulse came upon him to spring down from the waggon and walk back to town and tell Lady Augusta to fear everything, that he would never rest nor let her rest till he won her daughter back to a more smiling life. Alas, of all follies what could be so foolish? he, the tutor, the dependant, without power to help either himself or her. The waggon rushed along the dark country road, making a little circle of light round its lamps, while the sound of the horses' feet, and the roll of the wheels, enveloped them in a circle of sound, separating, as it were,

this moving speck of light and motion from all the inanimate world. It would have been as easy to change that dark indifferent sphere suddenly into the wide and soft sympathy of a summer evening, as for Edgar, at this period of his life, to have attempted from this hopeless abstraction, in which he was carried along by others, to have interfered with another existence and turned its course aside. Not now—if ever, not yet—and, ah, when, if ever? It was a long time before he was able to speak at all, and his companion, who thus wittingly or unwittingly, threw such firebrands of thought into his disturbed mind was silent too, either respectful of Edgar's feelings, or totally unconscious of them, he could not tell which.

"May I ask," he inquired, after a long pause, clearing his throat, which was parched and dry, "what was meant by 'Helena's sad business?' What has become of that Miss Thornleigh?"

"What has become of her is, that she's married," said Mr. Tottenham. "A very natural thing, though Helena, I believe, was a little ashamed of herself for giving into it. She married a man who has nothing but his brains to recommend him —no family to speak of, and no money, which, between ourselves, is a good deal worse. He is a professor, and a critic, and that sort of thing—too clever for me, but he suits her better than anyone I know. Helena is a totally different sort of person, sure to have her own way, whatever she takes into her head. Now Gussy, on the contrary——"

"Mr. Tottenham," said Edgar, hoarsely, "for God's sake, don't say any more."

"Ah!" said the other; and then he added, "I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon," and flourished his whip in the air by way of a diversion. This manœuvre was so successful that the party had quite enough to think of to keep their seats, and their heads cool in case of an accident, as

the spirited beasts plunged and dashed along the remaining bit of way. "That was as near a spill as I remember," Mr. Tottenham said, as he threw the reins to the groom, when, after a tearing gallop up the avenue, the bays drew up at the door. He was flushed with the excitement and the struggle; and whether he had put Edgar to the torture in ignorance, or with any occult meaning, the sufferer could not discover. The momentary gleam of danger at the end had however done even Edgar good.

Lady Mary met them at dinner, smiling and pretty, ready to lend an ear to anything interesting that might be said, but full of her own projects as when they left her. She had carried out her plans with the business-like despatch which women so often excel in, and Edgar, whose mind had been so remorselessly stirred and agitated all day, found himself quite established as an active coadjutor in her great scheme, at night.

"I have sent a little circular to the printers," said Lady Mary, "saying when the German lectures would be resumed. You said Tuesday, I think, Mr. Earnshaw? That is the day that suits us best. Several people have been here this afternoon, and a great deal of interest has been excited about it; several, indeed, have sent me their names already. Oh, I told them you were working half against your will, without thinking very much of the greatness of the object; indeed, with just a little contempt—forgive me, Mr. Earnshaw—for this foolish fancy of women trying to improve their minds."

"No, only for the infinitely odd fancy of thinking I can help in the process," said Edgar, dragging himself, as it were, within this new circle of fantastic light. His own miseries and excitements, heaven help him, were fantastic enough; but how real they looked by the side of this theoretical distress! or so at least the young man thought. I cannot tell with what half-laughing

surprise, when his mind was at ease—but half-irritated dismay when he was troubled —he looked at this lady, infinitely more experienced in men and society and serious life than himself, who proposed to improve her mind by means of his German lessons. Was she laughing at him and the world? or was it a mere fashion of the time which she had taken up? or, most wonderful of all, was she sincere and believing in all this? He really thought she was, and so did she, not perceiving the curious misapprehension of things and words involved. It is common to say that a sense of humour saves us from exposing ourselves in many ways, yet it is amazing how little even our sense of humour helps us to see our own graver absurdities, though it may throw the most unclouded illumination upon those of other people.

"That is a polite way of concealing your sentiments," said Lady Mary; "but never mind, I am not angry. I am so sure of the rightness of the work, and of its eventual success, that I don't mind being

laughed at. To enlarge the sphere of ideas ever so little is an advantage worth fighting for."

"Very well," said Edgar, "I am proud to be thought capable of enlarging somebody's sphere. What do lectures on German mean? Before I begin you must tell me what I have to do."

"You must teach them the language, Mr. Earnshaw."

"Yes, but where shall we begin? with the alphabet? Must I have a gigantic black board to write the letters on?"

"Oh, not so rudimentary as that; most of the ladies, in fact, know a little German," said Lady Mary. "I do myself, just enough to talk."

"Enough to talk! I don't know any more of English, my native tongue," said Edgar, "than just enough to talk."

"Don't laugh at me, Mr. Earnshaw. I know nothing of the grammar, for instance. We are never taught grammar. We get a kind of knowledge of a language,

just to use it, like a tool; but what is the principle of the tool, or how it is put together, or in what way it is related to other tools of the same description, I know no more than Adam did."

"She knows a great deal more than I do," said Mr. Tottenham, admiringly. "I never could use that sort of tool, as you call it, in my life. A wonderfully convenient thing though when you can do it. I never was much of a hand at languages; you should learn all that when you are quite young, in the nursery, when it's no trouble—not leave it till you have to struggle with verbs, and all that sort of thing; not to say that you never can learn a foreign language by book."

Mr. Tottenham uttered these sentiments in a comfortable, leisurely, dressing-gown and slippers sort of way. He did not give in to these indulgences in reality, but when he came upstairs to the drawing-room, and stretched himself in his great chair by the fire, and felt the luxurious warmth steal

through him, after the chill of the drive and the excitement of its conclusion, he felt that inward sense of ease and comfort which nerves a man to utter daring maxims and lay down the law from a genial height of good-humour and content.

"Tom!" cried Lady Mary, with impatience; and then she laughed, and added, "barbarian! don't throw down all my arguments in your sleepy way. If there is anything of what you call chivalry left in the world, you men, who are really educated and whom people have taken pains with, ought to do your best to help us who are not educated at all."

"Oh! that is the state of the case? Am I so very well educated? I did not know it," said Mr. Tottenham, "but you need not compel us to follow Dogberry's maxim, and produce our education when there's no need for such vanities. I have pledged you to come to the shop, Mary, on Wednesday week. They think a great deal of securing my lady. They are going to

give the trial scene from Pickwick, which is threadbare enough, but suits this sort of business, and there's a performance of Watson's on the cornet, and a duet, and some part songs, and so forth. I daresay it will bore you. This affair of Miss Lockwood's is very troublesome," Mr. Tottenham continued, sitting upright in his chair, and knitting his brows; "everything was working so well, and a real desire to improve showing itself among the people. These very girls, a fortnight since, were as much interested in the glacier theory, and as much delighted with the snow photographs as it was possible to be; but the moment a private question comes in, everything else goes to the wall."

"I suppose," said Edgar, "the fact is that we are more interested about each other, on the whole, than in any abstract question, however elevating."

"Why, that is as much as to say that everything must give place to gossip,"

said Lady Mary, severely, "a doctrine I will never give in to."

"And, by the way," said Mr. Tottenham, sinking back into dreamy ease, "that reminds me of your sister's great news. What sort of a family is it? I remember young Granton well enough, a good-looking boy in the Guards, exactly like all the others. Little Mary is, how old? Twenty-one? How those children go on growing. It is the first good marriage, so to speak, in the family. I am glad Augusta is to to have the salve of a coronet after all her troubles."

"What a mixture of metaphors!" cried Lady Mary, "the salve of a coronet!"

"That comes of my superior education, my dear," said Mr. Tottenham. "She doesn't deny it's a comfort to her. Her eyes, poor soul, had a look of satisfaction in them. And she has had anxiety enough of all kinds."

"We need not discuss Augusta's affairs, Tom," said Lady Mary, with a glance at

Edgar, so carefully veiled that the aroused and exciting state in which he was, made him perceive it at once. She gave her husband a much more distinct warning glance; but he, good man, either did not, or would not see it.

"What, not such a happy incident as this?" said Mr. Tottenham; "the chances are we shall hear of nothing else for some time to come. It will be in the papers, and all your correspondents will send you congratulations. After all, as Earnshaw says, people are more interested about each other than about any abstract question. I should not wonder even, if, as one nail knocks out another, little Mary's great marriage may banish the scandal about Miss Lockwood from the mind of the shop."

Lady Mary for some seconds yielded to an impulse quite unusual to her. "What can the shop possibly have to do—" she began, hastily, "with the Thornleigh affairs?" she added, in a subdued tone.

"If it was our own little Molly, indeed, whom they all know—"

"My dear Mary, they interest themselves in all your alliances," said Mr. Tottenham, "and you forget that Gussy is as well known among them as you are. Besides, as Earnshaw says— Don't go, Earnshaw; the night is young, and I am unusually disposed for talk."

"So one can see," said Lady Mary, under her breath, with as strong an inclination to whip her husband as could have been felt by the most uncultivated of womankind. "Come and look at my prospectus and the course of studies we are arranging for this winter, Mr. Earnshaw. Some of the girls might be stirred up to go in for the Cambridge examinations, I am sure. I want you so much to come to the village with me, and be introduced to a few of them. There is really a great deal of intelligence among them; uneducated intelligence, alas! but under good guidance, and with the help which all my

friends are so kindly willing to give—"

"But please remember," cried Edgar, struggling for a moment on the edge of the whirlpool, "that I cannot undertake to direct intelligence. I can teach German if you like—though probably the first German governess that came to hand would do it a great deal better."

"Not so, indeed; the Germans are, perhaps, better trained in the theory of education than we are; but no woman I have ever met had education enough herself to be competent to teach in a thoroughly effective way," cried Lady Mary, mounting her steed triumphantly. Edgar sat down humbly by her, almost forgetting, in his sense of the comical position which fate had placed him in, the daily increasing embarrassments which filled his path. All the Universities put together could scarcely have made up as much enthusiasm for education as shone in Lady Mary's pretty eyes, and poured from her lips in

floods of eloquence. Mr. Tottenham, who leaned back in his chair abstractedly, and pondered his plans for the perfection of the faulty and troublesome little society in the shop, took but little notice, being sufficiently occupied with views of his own; but Edgar felt his own position as a superior being, and representative of the highest education, so comical that it was all he could do to keep his gravity. To guide the eager uneducated intelligence, to discipline the untrained thought, nay, to teach women to think, in whose hands he, poor fellow, felt himself as a baby, was about the most ludicrous suggestion, he felt, that could have been made to him. But nothing could exceed the good faith and earnestness with which Lady Mary expounded her plans, and described the results she hoped for. This was much safer than the talk about little Mary Thornleigh's marriage—or the unexplainable reasons which kept Gussy Thorn-

leigh from marrying at all—or any other of those interesting personal problems which were more exciting to the mind, and much less easily discussed.

CHAPTER V.

THE VILLAGE.

THE next afternoon was appointed by Lady Mary as the time at which Edgar should accompany her to Harbour Green, and be made acquainted with at least a portion of his future pupils. As I have said, this was a safe sort of resource, and he could not but feel that a compassionate understanding of his probable feelings, and difficulties of a more intimate kind, had something to do with Lady Mary's effort to enlist him so promptly and thoroughly in the service of her scheme. Both husband and wife, however, in this curious house were so

thoroughly intent upon their philanthropical schemes, that it was probably mere supererogation to add a more delicate unexpressed motive to the all-sufficing enthusiasm which carried them forward. Shortly, however, before the hour appointed, a little twisted note was brought to him, postponing till the next day the proposed visit to the village, and Edgar was left to himself to pursue his own studies on Phil's behalf, whose education he felt was quite enough responsibility for one so little trained in the art of conveying instruction as he was. Phil had already favoured him with one of those engrossing and devoted attachments which are so pleasant, yet sometimes so fatiguing to the object. He followed Edgar about wherever he went, watched whatever he did with devout admiration, and copied him in such minute matters as were easily practicable, with the blindest adoration. The persistence with which he quoted Mr. Earnshaw had already be-

come the joke of the house, and with a devotion which was somewhat embarrassing he gave Edgar his company continually, hanging about him wherever he was. As Edgar read Lady Mary's note which the boy brought to him, Phil volunteered explanations.

"I know why mamma wrote you that note," he said, "it's because Aunt Augusta is there. I heard them saying—"

"Never mind what you heard them saying," said Edgar; and then he yielded to a movement of nature. "Was your aunt alone, Phil?" he asked—then grew crimson, feeling his weakness.

"How red your face is, Mr. Earnshaw, are you angry? No, I don't think she was alone; some of the girls were with her. Mamma said she was engaged to you, and they made her give it up."

"Naturally," said Edgar, "any day will do for me. What do you say now, Phil, as I am free for the afternoon, to a long walk?"

"Hurrah!" cried the boy, "I wanted so much to go up to the gamekeeper's, up through the woods to see the last lot of puppies. Do you mind walking that way? Oh, thanks, awfully! I am so much obliged to Aunt Augusta for stopping mamma."

"Come along then," said Edgar. He was glad to turn his back on the house, though he could not but look back as he left, wondering whether, at any moment at any door or window, the face might appear which he had not seen for so long —the face of his little love, whom he had once loved but lightly, yet which seemed to fix itself more vividly in his recollection every day. He could not sit still and permit himself to think that possibly she was in the same house with him, within reach, that he might hear at any moment the sound of her voice. No, rather, since he had given his voluntary promise to her mother, and since he was so far separated from her by circumstances, rather hurry

out of the house and turn his back upon a possibility which raised such a tumult in his heart. He breathed more freely when he was out of doors, in the damp wintry woods, with Phil, who kept close by his side, carrying on a monologue very different in subject, but not so different in character from his father's steady strain of talk. There is a certain charm in these wintry woods, the wet greenness of the banks, the mournful stillness of the atmosphere, the crackle of here and there a dropping branch, the slow sailing through the air now and then of a leaf, falling yellow and stiff from the top of a bough. Edgar liked the covert and the companionship of trees, which were denuded like himself of all that had made life brave and fair. The oaks and beeches, stiffening in their faded russet and yellow, stood against the deep green of the pine and firs, like forlorn old beauties in rustling court dresses of a worn-out fashion; the great elms and spare tall poplars spread

their intricate lacework of branches against the sky; far in the west the sun was still shining, giving a deep background of red and gold to the crowded groups of dry boughs. The rustle of some little woodland animal warmly furred among the fallen leaves and decaying husks, the crackling of that branch which always breaks somewhere in the silence, the trickle of water, betraying itself by the treacherous greenness of the mossy grass—these were all the sounds about, except their own footsteps, and the clear somewhat shrill voice of the boy, talking with cheerful din against time, and almost making up for the want of the birds, so much did his cheerful aimless chatter resemble their sweet confusion of song and speech, the ordinary language of the woods.

"I could hit that squirrel as easy as look at him. I bet you a shilling I could! only just look here, cocking his shining

eye at us, the cheeky little brute! Here goes!"

"Don't," said Edgar, "how should you like it if some Brobdingnagian being took a shot at you? What do you think, Phil—were those ladies going to stay?"

"Those ladies?" cried Phil in amazement, for indeed they were dragged in without rhyme or reason in the middle of the woods and of their walk. "Do you mean Aunt Augusta and the girls? Oh, is that all? No, I don't suppose so. Should you mind? They're jolly enough you know, after all, not bad sort of girls, as girls go."

"I am glad you give so good an account of them," said Edgar, amused in spite of himself.

"Oh, not half bad sort of girls! nicer a great deal than the ones from the Green, who come up sometimes. But, I say, Myra Witherington's an exception. She *is* fun; you should see her do old Jones, or the Rector; how you would laugh! Once I

saw her do papa. I don't think she meant it; she just caught his very tone, and the way he turns his head, all in a moment; and then she flushed up like fire and was in such a fright lest we should notice. Nobody noticed but me."

"Your cousins, I suppose, are not so clever as that," said Edgar, humouring the boy, and feeling himself as he did so, the meanest of household spies.

"It depends upon which it is. Mary is fun, the one that's going to be married," said Phil, "I suppose *that* will spoil her; and Bee is not bad. She ain't so clever as Mary, but she's not bad. Then there's Gussy, is a great one for telling stories; she's capital when it rains and one can't get out. She's almost as good as the lady with the funny name in the Arabian Nights."

"Does she often come here?" said Edgar with a tremble in his voice.

"They say she's going to be a nun," said Phil; "how funny people are! I can't

fancy Cousin Gussy shut up in a convent, can you? I'd rather marry, like Mary, some great swell; though they are never any fun after they're married," Phil added parenthetically with profound gravity. As for Edgar he was in no humour to laugh at this precocious wisdom. He went straight on, taking the wrong way, and scarcely hearing the shouts of the boy who called him back. "This is the way to the gamekeeper's," cried Phil, "Mr. Earnshaw, where were you going? You look as if you had been set thinking and could not see the way."

How true it was; he had been set thinking, and he knew no more what road he was going than if he had been blindfolded. Years after, the damp greenness of the fading year, the songless season, the bare branches against the sky, would bring to Edgar's mind the moment when he shot off blankly across the path in the wood at Tottenham's, not knowing and not caring where he went.

Next day Lady Mary fulfilled her promise. She drove him down in her own pony carriage to the village, and there took him upon a little round of calls. They went to the Rectory, and to Mrs. Witherington's, and to the Miss Bakers who were great authorities at Harbour Green. The Rector was a large heavy old man, with heavy eyes, who had two daughters, and had come by degrees (though it was secretly said not without a struggle) to be very obedient to them. He said, "Ah, yes, I dare say you are right," to everything Lady Mary said, and gave Edgar a little admonition as to the seriousness of the work he was undertaking. "Nothing is more responsible, or more delicate than instructing youth," said the Rector, "for my part I am not at all sure what it is to come to. The maids know as much now as their mistresses used to do, and as for the mistresses I do not know where they are to stop."

"But you would not have us condemned

to ignorance, papa," said one of his daughters.

"Oh, no, I should not take it upon me to condemn you to anything," said the old man with his quavering voice, "I hope only that you may not find you've gone further than you had any intention of going, before you've done."

This somewhat vague threat was all he ventured upon in the way of remonstrance; but he did not give any encouragement, and was greatly afraid of the whole proceeding as revolutionary, and of Lady Mary herself, as a dangerous and seditious person sowing seeds of rebellion. Mrs. Witherington, to whom they went next, was scarcely more encouraging. Her house was a large Queen Anne house, red brick, with a pediment surmounting a great many rows of twinkling windows. It fronted to the Green, without any grassplot or ornamental shrubs in front; but with a large well-walled garden behind, out of which rich branches of lilac

and laburnum drooped in spring, and many scents enriched the air. The rooms inside were large, but not very lofty, and the two drawing-rooms occupied the whole breadth of the house, one room looking to the Green and the other to the garden. There were, or ought to have been folding doors between, but these were never used, and the opening was hung with curtains instead, curtains which were too heavy, and overweighted the rooms. But otherwise the interior was pretty, with that homely gracefulness, familiar and friendly which belongs to the dwelling of a large family where everyone has his, or rather her, habitual concerns and occupations. The front part was the most cheerful, the back the finest. There a great mirror was over the mantelpiece, but here the late Colonel's swords, crossed, held the place of honour. The visitors entered through this plainer room, which acted as ante-chamber to the other, and where Mrs. Witherington was discovered, as in a scene

at the theatre, seated at a writing table with a pile of tradesmen's books before her. She was a tall spare woman, having much more the aspect which is associated with the opprobrious epithet, old maid, than that which traditionally ought to belong to the mother of nine children—all except the four daughters who remained at home—out and about in the world. She had three sons who were scattered in the different corners of the earth, and two daughters married, one of whom was in India, and the other a consul's wife in Spain. The young ladies at home were the youngest of the family, and were, the two married daughters said to each other when they met, which was very seldom, "very differently brought up from what we were, and allowed a great deal too much of their own way." Neither of these ladies could understand what mamma could be thinking of to indulge those girls so; but Mrs. Witherington was by no means an over-indulgent person by nature,

and I think she must have made up her mind that to indulge the vagaries of the girls was safest on the whole and most conducive to domestic peace.

Fortunately each of these young women had a "way" of her own, except Myra, the youngest, who was the funny one, whom Phil and most boys admired. The others were—Sissy, who was understood to have a suspended love affair, suspended in consequence of the poverty of her lover, from which she derived both pain and pleasure, so to speak; for her sisters, not to speak of the other young ladies of the Green, undoubtedly looked up to her in consequence, and gave her a much more important place in their little world than would have been hers by nature; and Marian, who was the musical sister, who played "anything" at sight, and was good for any amount of accompaniments, and made an excellent second in a duet; and Emma, who was the useful one of the family, and possessed the handsome little sewing-machine in the corner, at which she exe-

cuted yards upon yards of stitching every day, and made and mended for the establishment. Sissy, in addition to having a love affair, drew; so that these three sisters were all well defined, and distinct. Only Myra was good for nothing in particular. She was the youngest, long the baby, the pet of the rest, who had never quite realized the fact that she was no longer a child. Myra was saucy and clever, and rather impertinent, and considered a wit in her own family. Indeed they all had been accustomed to laugh at Myra's jokes, almost as long as they could recollect, and there is nothing that establishes the reputation of a wit like this. Mrs. Witherington was alone in the anteroom, as I have said, when Lady Mary entered, followed by Edgar. She rose somewhat stiffly to meet her visitors, for she too being of the old school disapproved of Lady Mary, who was emphatically of the new school, and a leader of all innovations; though from the fact of

being Lady Mary, she was judged more leniently than a less distinguished revolutionary would have been. Mrs. Witherington made her greetings sufficiently loud to call the attention of all the daughters, who came in a little crowd, each rising from her corner to hail the great lady. One of them drew the cosiest chair near the fire for her, another gave her an embroidered hand-screen to shield her face from its glow, and the third hung about her in silent admiration, eagerly looking for some similar service to render. Myra followed last of all, rushing audibly downstairs, and bursting into the room with eager exclamations of pleasure.

"I saw the pony-carriage at the Rectory gate, and I hoped you were coming here," cried Myra; who stopped short suddenly, however, and blushed and laughed at sight of the stranger whom she had not perceived.

"This is Mr. Earnshaw, Myra," said

Lady Mary, "whom I told you of—who is going to be so good as to teach us. I am taking him to see some of the ladies whom he is to help to educate."

"Please don't convey a false impression," said Edgar. "You are all a hundred times better educated than I am. I don't make any such pretensions."

"We are not educated at all," said Sissy Witherington, folding her hands, with a soft sigh. She said it because Lady Mary said it, and because soft sighs were the natural expression of a young heart blighted; but I don't think she would have liked to hear the same sentiment from any one else.

"Indeed, I think it is extremely disagreeable of you all to say so," said Mrs. Witherington, "and a reflection on your parents, who did the very best they could for you. I am sure your education, which you despise so, cost quite as much, at least for the last year or two, as the boys' did. I beg your pardon, Lady Mary—but

I do think it is a little hard upon the older people, all these fine ideas that are being put into the girls' heads."

"But, dear Mrs. Witherington, how could you help it?" said the rebel chief. "The very idea of educating women is a modern invention; nobody so much as thought of it in the last generation. Women have never been educated. My mother thought exactly the same as you do. There was absolutely *no* education for women in her day."

"Well," said Mrs. Witherington, more erect than ever, "I had an idea once that I myself was an educated person, and I daresay so had the countess—till my children taught me better."

"I declare it is hard on mamma," cried Myra; "the only one among us who can write a decent hand, or do anything that's useful."

"Of course nobody means that," said Lady Mary. "What I say is that every generation ought to improve and make progress, if there is to be any amelioration in the

world at all; and as, fortunately, there has sprung up in our day an increased perception of the advantages of education—"

Here Emma's sewing-machine came to a little knot, and there was a sharp click, and the thread broke. "Oh, that comes of talking!" said Emma, as she set herself to pull out the ravelled thread and set it right again. She was not accustomed to take much share in the conversation, and this was her sole contribution to it while the visitors remained.

"Well, a sewing-machine is a wonderful invention," said Mrs. Witherington; "don't you think so, Mr. Earnshaw? Not that I like the work much myself. It is always coarse and rough on the wrong side, and you can't use it for fine things, such as baby's things, for instance; but certainly the number of tucks and flounces that you can allow yourself, knowing that the machine will do dozens in a day, is extraordinary. And in a house where there are so many girls!—Emma does a

great deal more with her machine, I am sure, than ever Penelope did, who was one of your classical friends, Lady Mary."

"And she can undo her work still more quickly," cried Myra, with an outburst of laughter, "as it's only chain-stitch. What a pity Penelope did not know of it."

"But then the question is," said Sissy, "whether we are so very much the better for having more tucks and flounces. (By the way, no one wears tucks now, mamma.) The good of a sewing-machine is that it leaves one much more time for improving one's mind."

"In my day," said Mrs. Witherington, going on with her private argument, "we had our things all made of fine linen, instead of the cotton you wear now; and trimmed with real lace instead of the cheap imitation trash that everybody has. We had not so much ornament, but what there was, was good. My wedding things were all trimmed with real Mechlin *that* broad—"

"That must have been very charming,"

said Lady Mary; "but in the meantime we must settle about our work. Mr. Earnshaw is willing to give us an hour on Tuesdays. Shall you all come? You must not undertake it, if it will interfere with other work."

"Oh yes, I want to know German better," said Sissy. "It would be very nice to be able to speak a little, especially if mamma goes abroad next summer as she promises. To know a language pretty well is so very useful."

Lady Mary made a little gesture of despair with her pretty hands. "Oh, my dear girls," she said, "how are you ever to be thoroughly educated if you go on thinking only of what's useful, and to speak a little German when you go abroad? What is wanted is to make you think—to train your minds into good methods of work—to improve you altogether mentally, and give you the exactness of properly cultivated intellects; just the thing that we women never have."

Myra was the only one who had courage enough to reply, which she did with such a good hearty ringing peal of laughter as betrayed Edgar out of the gravity becoming the situation. Myra thought Lady Mary's address the best joke in the world.

CHAPTER VI.

WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS.

"IT is astonishing," said Lady Mary, mournfully, "how entirely one is misunderstood in all one's deeper meanings—even by those one has, so to speak, trained one's self."

"Yes," said Edgar, hesitating, with the modesty that became his humble pretensions; "but, after all, to desire a piece of knowledge because it is useful, is not an unworthy sentiment."

"Oh, no, not at all an unworthy sentiment; indeed, very right in its way; but totally subversive," said Lady Mary, sadly, "of the highest principle of education,

which aims at thorough cultivation of the mind rather than at conferring certain common-place matter-of-fact acquirements. Considered in that point of view, professional education would be the highest, which I don't think it is. Unless education is prized for itself, as a discipline of the mind, and not merely as teaching us some things we don't know, we can never reach the highest level; and that truth, alas!" Lady Mary sighed, still more sadly, with all the disappointment of a baffled reformer, "women have not even begun to perceive. You laugh, Mr. Earnshaw, but, for my part, I cannot laugh."

Edgar made the best apology he could for his untimely merriment. He was very much inclined to adopt the primitive Adamic argument, and declare that it was Myra's fault; but either high principle, or terror of Lady Mary (I think the latter) intervened, and he refrained from thus committing himself. They walked along the sunny side of the Green together,

the ponies having been sent home on account of the cold. It was a pretty place, like a village of romance, a succession of irregular houses surrounding a large triangular green, which was very green, and very well kept, and almost entirely appropriated to the gentry, though now and then a ragged donkey of the lower classes would graze peaceably in a corner, to the great advantage, pictorially, of the scene. Some of the houses were, like Mrs. Witherington's, of Queen Anne's time, not antique, but pleasantly old-fashioned and characteristic; others were white cottages, half hid in shrubberies. In one, which was very red, and very close upon the road, and had its rows of windows still more crowded than the others—a thin house, only one room in depth, with a very brightly polished brass knocker, and very white steps—there were signs of confusion which caught Lady Mary's eye. She explained to Edgar that it was the doctor's house, that he was going away,

which was not much loss, as he was an old-fashioned man of the old school, and did not keep pace with the times; and that she trusted the new man, who was coming from Scotland, would be better. Edgar listened politely, without paying much attention, for, in his ignorance, he did not feel much interest in the new doctor.

"I must ask Miss Annetta about him," said Lady Mary, as she led the way into a house which turned only its gable to the Green, and possessed a carriage drive and a wilderness of lofty shrubs. The cottage itself was damp and weedy, and rather dark, with blinds and curtains half drawn over the little windows, and a sort of dim religious light, green in tone, and very limited in degree, pervading the place. When Edgar's eyes became accustomed to it, he saw that the little drawing-room was plastered over with corner cupboards, and velvet-covered shelves, and brackets, laden with old china and other curious things. The room was so crowded with these

ornaments, and with old furniture, that it was scarcely possible to move without displacing something—a drawback which was all the more apparent, as both the Miss Bakers were large persons, many sizes too big for their house. They were not a well-matched pair. The eldest was a harsh-featured woman, looking fully forty-five, and calling herself so, with a total disregard to the feelings of Miss Annetta, who, all the world knew, was but two years younger. Miss Baker was clever, and the other was silly; but yet Miss Annetta was the most calculated to attract the attention of the sympathetic spectator, who could either laugh at her, or weep over her, as his nature prompted. She had no remnant of youth in the foolish face that had once been pretty enough; but her entire development, mental and moral, seemed to have been arrested when she was about seventeen, at the age when croquet (if croquet existed—I am afraid it did not exist at so early a period) and new

patterns for worsted work, and crochet, were the furthest limits of her desires. Poor soul! to look at her, she was forty-three, *bien sonnés*, but to listen to her soft little voice and its prattle, she was seventeen, not a day more. This curious fossilised girl was left to Edgar's share in the heat of the conversation, which immediately ensued between Lady Mary and Miss Baker—who sympathised deeply on the educational question, and had a great deal to say to each other.

After Edgar had been introduced as being "so good as to be disposed to help" in the great work, he was for the moment forgotten, while the two ladies talked of committees and schemes of lectures, and a great many things which he felt to be quite above his humble intelligence. Miss Annetta was exactly in the same position. The talk was a great deal too old and too serious for her. She sat silent for a minute or two, feeling somewhat coy of addressing that wonder and mystery, "a

gentleman," giving him little looks, half-saucy, half-timid, and betraying an inclination to go off into giggles of laughter, which filled Edgar with the gravest surprise. Finally, she made a bold step, and addressed him, giving the curls which she wore on each side of her face a little shake and toss of conscious attractiveness before she began.

"You have not been long in the neighbourhood, Mr. Earnshaw? Do say you like it. Dear Lady Mary makes Tottenham so charming, *so* charming! It is such an acquisition having her. Have you had nice skating lately? I hear some of the young ladies from the Green have been at the pond. I have not gone yet myself, for I don't skate, though everybody does now-a-days. They tell me I should learn directly if I only had the courage to try; but I am such a little coward, I really daren't venture. Of course you will laugh at me; but I dare not. I really haven't the courage."

"I am not at all surprised that you have not the courage," said Edgar, looking at her smiling face, and much disturbed in his mind as to what to say. "One must make up one's mind to a good many tumbles; which are all very well for boys and girls—"

"Oh," I shouldn't like that," cried Miss Annetta; "children, as you say, don't mind. What a pity you did not come in the summer, Mr. Earnshaw. It is such a sociable neighbourhood. We had a garden party somewhere, at least twice a week, and they are such nice things for bringing young people together—don't you think so? Better than evening parties; you can see so much more of people, going at four or five o'clock—and if you're intimate, staying for high tea and a little music after. It is a delightful way of spending the day. There is nothing that can take the same place in winter. To be sure if a girl is bold and knows how to skate—but I really daren't try, I haven't the courage;

—and you don't give me much encouragement, Mr. Earnshaw, it must be allowed."

Edgar looked on in dismay while Miss Annetta shook her curls at him, and giggled as she had done when she was pretty and seventeen, just twenty-six years ago. What could he say? He was trying to find something polite and pleasant with which to carry on the conversation, when Lady Mary suddenly turned from her grave interview with the elder sister, and interfered for his salvation.

"Miss Annetta," said Lady Mary, suddenly, "I am sure I can get information from you about the doctor. Has he gone? and has the new one come? and who is he? I hope he is not a mere stupid country practitioner. I saw a great commotion at the house."

"Oh, poor Mrs. Franks," said Miss Annetta, "they were just preparing to go; but she, poor thing, though I don't like to speak of such things before gentlemen, went and had a baby this morning. It

has put them all out so dreadfully! and she had nothing ready, not so much as a little cap. Just like her, you will say; and of course they can't go away now for ever so long."

"Poor soul," said Lady Mary, "I must send and ask if we can do anything."

"Indeed, I think it wicked to encourage such people," said Miss Baker. "How dare she go on having babies, knowing she can't afford it? I have no pity for such a woman. Of course she brings it all on herself; and if she were the only one to suffer, I shouldn't mind. But just fancy a woman of my age, subject to bronchitis, left to the tender mercies of her ninny of a husband, probably for six weeks longer, just the worst time of the year—not to speak of Annetta, who is a perfect martyr to rheumatism."

"Oh, Jane!" exclaimed Miss Annetta, feebly.

"Though I think it's gout," said Miss Baker. "When gout is in a family, I

believe it never lets you go much beyond forty without entering an appearance; which is my great reason for hoping I shall escape scot-free, seeing I'm forty-five."

"You must not believe all my sister says; she is so fond of her fun," said Miss Annetta, in an aside to Edgar. "Oh, I have heard a great deal about the new doctor, Lady Mary. He is quite young, and very handsome and nice, people say. He is coming straight from Scotland, so I suppose he must be very clever, for so many new medical things are found out there. I hear he has dark hair and eyes, and tall, and a very nice manner."

"Well I suppose these are interesting details," said Lady Mary; "but I should have liked to know a little more of his qualifications, I confess."

"And he has a charming sister, a widow, who keeps his house; so that he will be able to ask people, which a bachelor never is, except men, and they don't count as society;" cried Miss

Annetta, continuing with breathless haste her report; for if Lady Mary had a fault, it was that she was too ready to interrupt uninteresting speeches. "The Franks are so poor, and they have so many children, they never were any good, not even for a garden party; but you must not think from what I say that I don't love children, Mr. Earnshaw. I adore them! When are Phil and little Mary coming for a romp, and to see all our curiosities? I do feel so much at home with them, Lady Mary, you can't think. Jane there says we are three romps all together, and she doesn't know which is the worst."

"They will be delighted to come;" said Lady Mary, rising.

"Oh, but I suppose I must ask permission of Mr. Earnshaw now?" said Miss Annetta. "If you will come too, you will see that your charge does not get into mischief, Mr. Earnshaw, and I am sure you will be quite an addition. You

are not one of the stern tutors that frighten poor little things like me."

"Indeed I must carry Mr. Earnshaw off. We have no time to spare," said Lady Mary. "Little fool!" she cried, severely, as soon as they had left the cottage. "I hope you don't mind her impertinent chatter? I am sure nothing could be further from my intention than to subject you to any such disagreeable comment."

"Disagreeable! to call me what I am, Phil's tutor?" said Edgar. "Why, what a mean-spirited wretch you must think me. To accept a post, and be ashamed of the name of it—"

"But, Mr. Earnshaw, you know that is not how we think. We consider you only as a friend—and take it as the greatest kindness you can do us." Then Lady Mary, with a flush of generous sentiment, took a warm little hand out of her muff, and gave it to Edgar, who was a great deal more touched by the *amende* than he

had been hurt by Miss Annetta's innocent assault.

"Thanks," he said, with moisture in his eyes, "so much the better for me, and so much the less reason for being ashamed of my post. If you snubbed me, I might have some excuse perhaps for making a fool of myself."

"Mr. Earnshaw!" said Lady Mary again, but this time with hesitation, and almost timidity. "I wonder if you will think, I mean to snub you—if I say something which I am almost bound to say?"

"Say it!" said Edgar, smiling. He felt in a moment that he knew what was coming, and looked into her tremulous countenance with all the superior calm of a man prepared for pain, and prescient of what was to come.

"You will not be angry? Oh, Mr. Earnshaw! if you only knew how I fret at such restrictions—how I wish we could put aside mercenary considerations, and

acknowledge ourselves all to be equal, as I am sure we are by nature!"

"I don't think we are equal by nature;" said Edgar,, "but never mind the abstract question. I promise not even to be wounded. And I think I know what you are going to say."

"It is just this," said Lady Mary, hurriedly, "Forgive me! The young Thornleighs, Mr. Earnshaw, have always been very much with us. I am fond of them, and so is Mr. Tottenham, and they are always coming and going. It would be ungenerous to you as well as unkind to them, if we were to send them away because you are here."

Edgar did no more than bow in assent. A certain sense of personal dignity, quite new to him, kept him from doing more.

"It would be thoroughly ungenerous to you," said Lady Mary, warmly, "and contrary to the perfect trust we feel—both my husband and I—in you, our friend."

"Just one word, Lady Mary," said

Edgar, "and pardon me if it seems harsh. Why did you not think of this before? I came here in a mist, not knowing very well what was to happen to me; but *you* knew the whole, both my side and the other. I need not say send me away, which is the most natural thing to do, for you were aware of all the circumstances the other day when you brought me here. Of course, at any moment, I am ready to go."

"That is not quite generous," said Lady Mary, with an appealing look, "of course we knew, and trusted you as we trust you now—fully. But, Mr. Earnshaw, forgive me! I promised to Augusta to say just one word."

"I have already said to Lady Augusta all that can be said," said Edgar; "that she need not fear me—that I will not put myself in her way."

They had, by this time, reached the avenue, and were walking unconsciously fast in the roused state of feeling which

this interview had called forth, between the long level lines of leafless trees, on the edge of the sodden, bright green wintry grass, which tempted the feet with its mossy softness. It was afternoon, and the long slanting lines of sunshine lighted up, but scarcely had the better of, the creeping shadows which bided their time in every corner. Lady Mary put out her hand again suddenly, with an excitement which she did not seem able to control, and laid it on Edgar's arm.

"Mr. Earnshaw!" she said, the tears coming to her eyes. "It is not for you. Augusta, like myself, trusts you entirely; it is not you"

"What then?" said Edgar, suddenly stopping short, and facing her.

"Mr. Earnshaw! Oh! how can I put into words the strange service—the thing beyond words, which Augusta thinks she can trust you enough to ask for. Oh! Mr. Earnshaw, see how absolute is our faith in you! It is not you she fears. It

is the impetuosity—it is the—— it is her own child."

Edgar stood still, and did not speak—how could he? In his life he had had enough to chill him one way or another; now, all at once, there seemed to burst forth a fountain of warmth and life within him—in his very heart. The water came to his eyes. If he had been alone I believe it would have overflowed, so poignant was the touch of this sudden, scarcely comprehensible happiness. "Ah!" he cried, summing up in that little syllable, as is done so often, worlds of sudden understanding, of emotion inexpressible in words; and so stood gazing at the unlucky emissary, who had put things inconceivable, things unbelievable, all at once into his throbbing brain.

"Oh, God forgive me!" cried Lady Mary, with a devoutness quite unusual to her. "What have I done—what have I done?"

"Look here," said Edgar, feeling a

strange difficulty of articulation, and with a consciousness that, instead of being eloquent, as he ought to have been in the circumstances, his words were homely, almost rude; "So far as I am myself concerned, nothing will make me swerve from my word. Lady Augusta need have no fear for me; but if—" and here he paused, "if the happiness of another were any way involved. It is not my supposition, pardon me, it is yours. If——then I will be bound by no word, no promise, nothing but—*her* will whatever it is. Iam ready to balk myself, to give up the desire of my heart, to say never a word, so far as I am concerned. But her I will not balk; it is not my place. *Her* will she shall have if I can get it for her—at any risk, with any pains! Lady Mary, bid me go, or take the consequences; this is all I will say."

"Oh, Mr. Earnshaw!" cried Lady Mary, in a burst of injudicious sympathy. "Oh, Edgar! now I understand them;" and

with that, this very foolish, very clever, little woman sat down upon the stump of a tree, and cried with all her heart. She was totally taken by surprise. She had believed him to be so good, so ready to obliterate himself, that she half despised him through all her generous compassion and liking. I think it is Mr. Charles Reade who describes, somewhat coarsely perhaps, but very powerfully, the woman's surprise at discovering herself to be, for the first time, face to face with a male of her own species. The surprise, I believe, is common to both sexes, and as much when love is out of the question as when it is deeply involved. It is one of the most penetrating of mental sensations—a sudden revelation. Lady Mary felt this as she sat down on the stump of the tree, and called Edgar Earnshaw by his Christian name, and cried, suddenly abandoning her colours, giving up her cause, owning herself utterly conquered. It was a great deal to be accomplished by so few words,

and Edgar himself was so entirely moved and shaken by what had occurred, that he was not half sensible of his own success. All he knew was that Lady Mary felt for him, understood him; and this gave him comfort, when he suddenly dropped down after the exaltation of his sudden transport into a sadness which was its natural consequence. Lady Mary fell too, out of her sudden enthusiasm into a sense of absolute foolishness and the indiscreetest of sympathetic ebullitions, and picked herself up and went meekly along the avenue by Edgar's side, trying to talk about the children, and raking up nursery stories of Phil's cleverness to tell him, in what she would herself have thought the very imbecility of motherhood. Poor Lady Mary! she had the additional misery of thinking that Edgar perceived her utter downfall and change of sides—which he, poor fellow, with his heart jumping in his throat, was far too much agitated to do.

But when they came to the great door,

and were about to separate, she "thought it her duty" to leave him with a final word of counsel, "Mr. Earnshaw," she said, almost timidly, "you saw that I was carried away by my feelings—for I feel for you, however I may be obliged to side with my sister in what she thinks to be best. You will forget all I have been so foolish as to say—and keep to what you said to her, won't you? Don't let me have done harm instead of good."

"I will keep to what I said to her, religiously; she has my word," said Edgar, "but don't think I can ever forget what you have said to me."

"Mr. Earnshaw, it was in confidence."

"In closest, dearest confidence;" he said, "but not to be forgotten—never to be forgotten; that is not possible. It will be wiser to tell Lady Augusta what I have said; and remember, dear Lady Mary, you, who have been so good to me, that, at a moment's notice, at a word, at a look, I am ready to go away."

"Not if I can help it," she said, half crying again, holding out her hand; and in sight of the biggest of the powdered footmen, and of the porter, and of one of the under-gardeners, all looking on in consternation, he kissed it, absolutely indifferent to what any one might say. To be sure it was only a little glove he kissed, warm out of her muff.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OPPOSITE CAMP.

THE Thornleigh family, or at least the feminine portion of it, was, as has been indicated to the reader, in town—though it was still very early in the year—for the purpose of looking after little Mary's trousseau, as her wedding was to take place at Easter. Lady Augusta's family numbered eight altogether—five girls and three boys; and if I could tell you half the trouble she had gone through with them, you would no longer wonder at the wrinkles on her forehead. Her girls had been as troublesome as her boys, which seldom happens, and that was say-

ing a great deal. Harry, the eldest son, was a prodigal, constantly in debt and in trouble; John, the second, who, it was hoped, would have distinguished himself by his brains, had been plucked for his degree; and the regiment of which Reginald, the youngest son, was an ornament, had been sent off to India, contrary to all prognostications. As for the daughters, though the youngest was nineteen, only one was married—a terrible thought for an anxious mother, as anxious to do her duty by her children as Lady Augusta was—and that one!

The eldest was Ada, who, when her lover, only a poor clergyman at the best, died of typhus fever, caught in his work, never would look at another man, but retired meekly into old maidenhood. The second, Helena, was the clever one of the family. She had more brains than all the rest put together, everybody said, and so indeed she herself thought—more than she knew what to do with. If that head could

only have been put on her brother John's shoulders, what a blessing to everyone concerned! for, alas! all the good her brains did her, was to betray her into a marriage with a very clever and very learned professor, painfully superior to everybody else, but altogether out of "her own class." The third was Gussy, who had been always Lady Augusta's most dearly beloved, and who, three years ago, had been all but betrothed to the best match in the county — young Edgar Arden; but when Edgar was ruined, and disappeared, as it were, off the face of the earth, Gussy, instead of abandoning him as a sensible girl should have done, clung with the obstinacy which distinguished the Thornleighs, to the very recollection of him—which, as he was still living and marriageable, though no match at all, was a fanaticism much less manageable than Ada's. For Ada, if she insisted upon considering herself a widow, was at all events quite submissive in other matters, and

content to be her mother's right hand at home; but Gussy, who had by no means given up her personal possibilities of happiness, and whose hopes were still alive, had been very restless, and worried her family with many vagaries. Schemes and crotchets ran, I suppose, in the noble blood which Lady Augusta had transmitted to her daughters. It showed itself in different ways in the sisters: Helena's ways had been all intellectual, but Gussy, who was benevolent and religious, was more difficult to deal with. The melancholy seclusion, which to an English mind is the first characteristic of a convent, has little to do with the busy beehive of a modern sisterhood; and a young woman connected with such an institution has claims made upon her which are wonderfully embarrassing to a fashionable mother. Helena, in her wildest days, when she had all sorts of committees going on, could be taken to her meetings and lectures in the carriage, like a Christian, and could be

sent for when these *séances* were over; but Gussy had to trudge off on foot to all sorts of places in her long black cloak, and to visit houses in which fever, and every kind of evil, physical and moral, abounded; and was not to be shaken by any remonstrances. Indeed, the parents had been glad to compromise and consent to any amount of Associate-ship, so as to keep off the dreaded possibility of a determination on Gussy's part to enter the Sisterhood for good and all. I do not think that Gussy herself ever threatened this, though she thought of it sometimes as her best alternative, if—; but there was still an if, a living and strong peradventure in her mind. Other good-natured friends, however, strongly pressed the possibility on Lady Augusta's mind; they did all they could to persuade the anxious mother to take forcible steps in the matter, and constrain Gussy, on her obedience, to give up her objectionable charities and devotions. Fortunately Lady Augusta did not belong

to that class of women who take pleasure in worrying their children for their good. She shook her head when her pretty daughter, still as pretty as in her first season, went out in her black cloak, and the hideous bonnet, which the mother would not allow to herself was "becoming," notwithstanding its intrinsic hideousness. She moaned over the dirt, the disease, the evil smells and sights which her child was about to encounter, and about the risk of infection to which she would expose herself.

"Who can tell what you may bring back with you, Gussy?—fever, or one does not know what," Lady Augusta said, piteously. "It is so different with our poor people at home, whom we all know."

"I will shut myself up in my room, mamma; or I will go to the House, when there is anything infectious about; but I cannot give up my work," said Gussy, filial, but determined.

"Oh, work, child! what do you mean by work?" cried Lady Augusta, driven to

her wits' end. "Home is surely better than the 'House,' as you call it, and I am sure Ada and I find plenty to do at home. Why cannot you do as we do?"

"Perhaps because Ada and you do it all," said Gussy, unmoved by that despairing appeal which the old is always making to the new. Why cannot you do as we do?

Poor Lady Augusta! It was she who had to give in, not her daughter. And you may easily understand, dear reader, how such a good mother was affected by the break-down of all her elder hopes—Ada, Helena, Gussy. Her three eldest children—all failures! What a heart-breaking thought it was to a woman of fashion, surrounded by contemporaries who had married their daughters well, and whom no man could reproach as negligent of their highest duties! She would wake sometimes in the middle of the night, and ask herself was it her fault? Had she put foolish notions into the heads of the girls?

Certainly on the Thornleigh side there were no "views" nor "crotchets;" and Lady Augusta was aware that she herself had accomplished her own fate, not altogether because she preferred it, and had, perhaps, smothered personal predilections, which her children showed no inclination to smother. "Why cannot they do as I did?" she would say in her heart, with a sigh.

But now at last a moment had come, in which her natural cares were rewarded. When Lord Granton proposed for Mary, her mother had almost cried with joy. For the first time here was a satisfactory —a completely satisfactory conclusion. So unexceptionable a young man, such a title, such estates, and a family which any girl might be proud to enter! The delight was all the sweeter from being so long deferred, so sadly missed. She forgave Helena her bad match, and Gussy and Ada their no matches at all, in the exhilaration of this happy moment. All

her little grievances and grudges vanished in the sudden flood of sunshine. She was reconciled to all the world, even to Helena's husband, the Professor, over whom, too, a heavenly radiance would be flung, when he was brother-in-law to a marquis. Poor Lady Augusta! In the full height of her exhilaration she betook herself to Tottenham's to send the good news to her sister, feeling that now at least, perhaps for the first time, there was no trouble to lessen her happiness; and there she encountered, without any warning, Edgar! Heaven help her! a man still more objectionable, because more hopelessly penniless than Helena's professor, a man without a name, without a shilling, without a connection! but whom Gussy, her favourite daughter, was ready, she knew, to follow to the end of the world. When she drove out to the rural Tottenham's after this, to tell her sister the story of Mary's engagement, is it wonderful that her agitated mind should

have poured forth all its mingled strain of joy, tribulation, content, and alarm? The wholly joyful part of her budget was soon swallowed up in the revelation of her fears about Gussy, and in the reproaches she could not quite restrain. Why had her sister so added to her burdens, by this injudicious, this uncalled for interference in Edgar's fortunes? He was not so friendless, Lady Augusta protested, half indignant, half weeping, that they, of all the world, should have rushed into the breach, and taken him up—bringing him even into their house, where he could not fail to see Gussy one time or other. And then the anxious mother cried, and told her sister that she had no confidence in Gussy. In Edgar she had every confidence; he had promised never to thrust himself into her way; but Gussy had made no such promise, and her mother did not even dare to speak to her on the subject, knowing that she would be met by unanswerable arguments. Thus the two

ladies, talking over the whole matter, fell into a not unnatural snare, and resolved to confide in Edgar, and trust to him to keep Gussy, as well as himself, right—not foreseeing how that confidence would change to him the whole aspect of affairs. When Ada heard how far her mother's revelations had gone, and of the step Lady Mary was commissioned to take, she did not give it her approval, as Lady Augusta had hoped, but looked very grave, and doubted much the wisdom of the proceeding. "He promised never to stand in my way," Lady Augusta said, much depressed by her privy-councillor's disapproval. "But he did not promise for Gussy—what right would he have to undertake for Gussy?" said Ada, shaking her head. It was an idea which had not entered her mother's mind, for Lady Augusta had that kind of confidence in Edgar, as of a man born to set everything right, which women, especially when surrounded by practical difficulties, are so ready to place in an

ideal men. He had never objected to her commands hitherto; why should he now? Nevertheless, when Ada disappeared, Lady Augusta began to quake lest she should have done more harm than good.

"We must try to get something for him to do," she said, faltering, "something abroad. Notwithstanding all those absurd new arrangements, people of influence can still command situations abroad, I hope, if they choose to take the trouble. I shall speak to Lord Millboard, Ada; and I am sure Granton, dear fellow, would take any trouble, if he knew how important it was."

"Because he is happy himself, to prevent poor Gussy from being happy?" said Ada. "Oh, I am not saying anything against it, mamma. I suppose it will have to be."

"Of course it will have to be," said her mother, "you are all very unkind—you girls. Not one of you has exerted herself as I had a right to expect. Do

you think that I thought of nothing but pleasing myself when I married? And who has lost the most in losing Edgar? Well, Gussy, you may say, in one way; but I too. What a help he would have been to me! so kind and so understanding. Oh, Ada! if you knew how much it goes against my heart to shut him out. But it must be; what would your father—what would every one say?"

To this, Ada could return but little answer, except to murmur something about "leaving it in the hands of Providence," which was not so consolatory to Lady Augusta as it was meant to be.

"It is all very well to say, leave it to Providence!" cried that much tried mother, "if you had lived as long as I have, Ada, you would have found that all the most inconvenient things that happen in the world are said to be brought about by Providence—especially in the way of marriages. No, we must take precautions; Gussy must not go near

Tottenham's while he is there; and I'll tell you what I will do. Harry is at home doing nothing particular, and probably quarrelling with your poor papa, who has so much to vex him. I have just been wondering how they could possibly get on with all of us away. I will write and tell him to offer himself to 'your aunt Mary for a visit."

"Harry! what good will Harry do?" asked Ada, wondering.

"Well, my dear, at least he will be on the spot;" said Lady Augusta; and she breathed a long sigh, as if a weight had been taken off her mind. Any stop-gap, however imperfect, which takes, or seems to take, a responsibility off the mind, is enough to give a sense of relief to one so overborne by many businesses as Lady Augusta was. "And now, my dear, let us look over Mary's patterns;" she said, drawing a chair towards Ada's table, on which a mass of samples, of linen, silk, muslin, and every other fabric, known to

human ingenuity, were lying, ticketed and arranged in packets. This was a little bit of pure enjoyment, which refreshed the anxious mother in the midst of all her cares.

I need not tell what commotion was made in the household when the news crept out and stole secretly from one girl to another, that Edgar had come back. Mary and Beatrice put their curly heads together over it, and the result was a communication to the young Granton, which effectually fortified him against making himself a tool of any of poor Lady Augusta's schemings to get rid of the danger. These two were the children of the house, and the elder sisters paid but little attention to their innocent conspiracies. The elders were more interesting personages than little Mary and Bee, though Mary was a predestined marchioness, and there was no knowing what Bee might come to in the way of matrimonial elevation. There are people, no

doubt, who will think the old maid of the family its least interesting member; but you, dear unknown friend, my gentle reader, are not of that complexion; and there may be others who will feel that Ada's obscure life was a poor enough thing to settle down to, after all the hopes and all the disappointments of youth, both of which are more exciting and sustaining than the simple monotony of such a commonplace existence. I am not sure, however, for my own part, whether Ada's soft self-renunciation never expressed in words, and her constant readiness in trouble, and the numberless frocks she made for her poor children—and even her mother's meetings, though the family laughed at them—were half so bewildering an anti-climax to the high aspirations of youth as was Helena's Professor, and the somewhat humdrum, if highly intellectual routine into which she had dropped with him. Helena, herself now and then, had a confused and giddy

consciousness that ministering to a man's comforts, who was not at all a demi-god, and attending lectures at the Royal Society was a very odd and sudden downfall from all her dreams of social amelioration and "a great work;" but fortunately she was happy, a thing which deadens the moral perception. Ada was happy, too, in her different way; but Gussy was not happy. She had not the tranquil soul of her elder sister, nor that curious mixture of sense and talent, and self-confidence and absence of humour which made Helena what she was. She had not "given up," as in various ways both of them had done. She was dissatisfied, for life as yet had lost none of its possibilities, neither by fulfilment nor renunciation. All clouds might yet be cleared away from her sky, and what she considered perfect happiness might yet be waiting for her somewhere. This remnant of possibility that the soul may still have all it craves, ought, you might think, to have kept Gussy's heart alive, and given

her a secret support; but it was in fact a very fire of restlessness within her. The first step towards attaining the secondary happinesses of life, is to have given up and recognised as impossible the primary and greater happiness. Gussy had been compelled to occupy herself closely, in order to save herself from becoming discontented, morbid, sour, and miserable, by reason of this sense within her, that everything might yet come right.

"Why should you say it was injudicious?" she said to her sister, when they at length discussed the subject, "why should not they help him, since he wants it, because of the chance of meeting me? I heard what mamma said as I came in. If he does meet me, I dare say he has forgotten all about me by this time, or at least remembers me only as a friend. It would be hard indeed if any ghost of me, after all these years, were to come in his way."

"And you," said her sister, "could

you meet him as a friend whom you remembered? Would that be all?"

Gussy's lip quivered in spite of herself. "I hope I could do—whatever was necessary," she said proudly. But in the midst of uttering these two or three words, a sudden tear fell unexpectedly out of her eye and betrayed her. "How silly!" she said, dashing it away; "you forget I did see him. Oh, Ada, fancy travelling with him all those hours, and never saying a word! It was as if we were in two different worlds—like looking into another existence, and seeing those whom one has lost, without any power to communicate with them."

"Ah! but we are not permitted to do even that," said Ada; "do you think he did not recognise you? Not at all? That is so strange to me."

Gussy shook her head. "I don't think he did; but you must remember," she said humbly, "that he never was, what you might call so very much in love, with

me. He liked me; he was even fond of me—but not exactly in love. It is different—I always felt that, even when you all made so sure. And what he thinks of me now, I don't know. If I saw him once, I should be able to tell you; but I shall try not to see him. It is best I should not see him," said Gussy very low, "best in every way."

"My poor child!" said Ada; but she did not contradict her, as her sister almost hoped; and Gussy went away immediately after, with her heart full, to put on her black cloak and close bonnet, and to go forth into some very unsavoury region indeed, where a serene Sister, so smiling and cheery that you might be certain her mind was taken up by no possible happinesses, was hard at work. Gussy had some very disagreeable work allotted to her, which gave her full occupation till it was time to return to "the world," and as long as she was thus engaged she was able to forget all about herself and Edgar,

and everything else in the other existence. Thus Rag Fair was good for her, and gave her a certain amount of strength with which to return to Berkeley Square.

But the reader will perceive that if Edgar's mind was disturbed by what he had heard, a similar, if less violent commotion had been raised, by the mere intimation of his return, in the opposite camp, where every member of the family instinctively felt the danger, though the young and the romantic among them welcomed it as rather an advantage than a peril. Gussy went about her ordinary work, whether in "the world" or out of it, with a soft perpetual tremor, feeling that at any moment, round any corner, she might meet him with whom her youthful thoughts had wandered all these years. I will not say that she was not somewhat anxious and uncertain as to the effect which this long interval might have had upon Edgar's mind; for women seldom have a very strong faith, unassisted by evidence, in

the fidelity of a long absent lover; but she had no sense of having given love unsought, or shame in her own secret devotion. She knew that if Edgar had remained rich and prosperous she would have been his wife long ere now, and this gave to Gussy's maiden love that sweet legitimacy and pride of duty which is so much to a woman, and emboldens her to give without shame, and with all her heart.

In the meantime, however, Lady Augusta took that other precautionary measure which had suddenly occurred to her, to Ada's great surprise and consternation, and sent private orders to her son, Harry—who was at that moment under a cloud, and doing his best to act the part of a good son to a very irritable father who had just paid his debts for him, and was taking them out in abuse of every description at Thornleigh, while the mother and sisters were in town. I don't believe she had the least notion what good Harry could do; but it relieved him

from a very trying ordeal, and the young man jumped at it, though Ada shook her head. "He will be on the spot at least, my dear," said Lady Augusta, all unconscious of slang. She explained to her husband that the Tottenhams had taken one of their fancies to Mr. Earnshaw, whom they had all once known so well as Edgar Arden, and that she thought it would be well that one of the family should be there to keep an eye upon him, lest he and Gussy should meet. "For you know, Gussy has not been the same since that affair," wrote the careful mother. Mr. Thornleigh, who had a more than ordinary contempt at this moment for Harry's capabilities, wrote her a rather rude letter in reply, telling her that she was a fool indeed if she trusted in anything her hopeful son could do; but, nevertheless, he made no objection to the visit. Thus it will be seen how emphatically their own doing was all the confusion that followed this momentous step, which the Thorn-

leighs all combined in their ignorance to make Harry take—and which he accepted as he would have accepted any change, at that moment; not having the least idea of what was wanted of him, any more than of what fate had in store for him. Lady Augusta went on more calmly with her preparations for little Mary's grand wedding when she had thus, to her own satisfaction, secured a representative at Tottenham's. And Ada studied the patterns indefatigably, and gave the mother the very best advice as to which was most suitable; and Gussy had a perfect carnival of work, and spent almost all her time in Rag Fair—with occasional expeditions to the shop, where Mr. Tottenham had established a chapel, chiefly to please her, and where one of the clergymen attached to the Charity-House kept up daily service. This was much more dangerous, had Lady Augusta been aware of the fact, than the rural Tottenham's, where Harry

was set to be sentinel without knowing it.

And thus the first cold lingering days of spring—spring only in name, with all winter's cold, and less than winter's comfort, dragged themselves along. Only to Lady Augusta, who was busy with the trousseau, and little Mary, who was making love, the days were not long enough for all that had to be put into them; though the others were of a different mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

INTOXICATION.

THERE is, perhaps, no such crisis in the life of a man as that which occurs when, for the first time, he feels the welfare and happiness of another to be involved in his own. A woman is seldom so entirely detached from ordinary ties of nature as to make this discovery suddenly, or even to be in the position when such a discovery is possible. So long as you have but yourself to think of, you may easily be pardoned for thinking very little of that self, for being careless of its advantage, and letting favourable opportunities slip through your fingers; but suppose you

find out in a moment, without warning, that your interests are another's interests, that to push your own fortune is to push some one else's fortune, much dearer to you than yourself; and that, in short, you are no longer *you* at all, but the active member of a double personality—is as startling a sensation as can well be conceived. This was the idea which Edgar had received into his mind for the first time, and it was not wonderful that it excited, nay, intoxicated him, almost beyond his power of self-control. I say for the first time, though he had been on the eve of asking Gussy Thornleigh to marry him three years before, and had therefore realised, or thought he realised, what it would be to enter into such a relationship; but in those days Edgar was rich, and petted by the world, and his bride would have been only a delight and honour the more, not anything calling for sacrifice or effort on his part. He could have given her everything she desired in the world,

without losing a night's rest, or disturbing a single habit. Now the case was very different. The new-born pride which had made him, to his own surprise, so reluctant to apply to anyone for employment, and so little satisfied to dance attendance on Lord Newmarch, died at that single blow.

Dance attendance on Lord Newmarch! ask anybody, everybody for work! Yes, to be sure he would, and never think twice; for had he not now *her* to think of? A glow of exhilaration came over him. He had been careless, indifferent, sluggish, so long as it was himself only that had to be thought of. Thinking of himself did not suit Edgar; he got sick of the subject, and detested himself, and felt a hundred pricks of annoyance at the thought of being a suitor and applicant for patronage, bearing the scorns of office, and wanting as "patient merit" in a great man's ante-room. But now! what did he care for those petty annoyances? Why

should he object, like a pettish child, to ask for what he wanted? It was for her. He became himself again the moment that the strange and penetrating sweetness of this suggestion (which he declared to himself was incredible, yet believed with all his heart) stole into his soul. This had been what he wanted all along. To have some one to work for, some one to give him an object in life!

Lady Mary had not a notion what she was doing when she set light to the fire which was all ready for that touch—ready to blaze up, and carry with it her own schemes as well as her sister's precautions. I suppose it was by reason of the fundamental difference between man and woman, that neither of these ladies divined how their hint would act upon Edgar. They thought his virtue (for which they half despised him—for women always have a secret sympathy for the selfish ardour of men in all questions of love) was so great that he might be trusted to restrain even

Gussy herself in her "impetuosity," as they called it, without considering that the young man was disposed to make a goddess of Gussy, to take her will for law, and compass heaven and earth to procure her a gratification. Gussy, though she held herself justified in her unswerving attachment to Edgar, by the fact that, had it not been for his misfortune, she would long ago have been his wife, would, notwithstanding this consolation, have died of shame had she known how entirely her secret had been betrayed. But the betrayal was as a new life to Edgar. His heart rose with all its natural buoyancy; he seemed to himself to spurn his lowliness, his inactivity, his depressed and dejected state from him. That evening he beguiled his hosts into numberless discussions, out of sheer lightness of heart. He laughed at Lady Mary about her educational mania, boldly putting forth its comic side, and begging to know whether German lectures and the use of the globes were so

much better, as means of education than life itself, with all its many perplexities and questions, its hard lessons, its experiences, which no one can escape.

"If a demigod from the sixth form were to come down and seat himself on a bench in a dame's school," cried Edgar, "why, to be sure, he might learn something; but what would you think of the wisdom of the proceeding?"

"I am not a demigod from the sixth form," said Lady Mary.

"Pardon me, but you are. You have been among the regnant class all your life, which of itself is an enormous cultivation. You have lived familiarly with people who guide the nation; you have spoken with most of those who are known to be worth speaking to, in England at least; and you have had a good share of the problems of life submitted to you. Mr. Tottenham's whole career, for instance, which he says you decided—"

"What is that?" said Mr. Tottenham,

looking up. "Whatever it is, what you say is quite true. I don't know if it's anything much worth calling a career; but, such as it is, it's all her doing. You're right there."

"I am backed up by indisputable testimony," said Edgar, laughing; "and in the face of all this, you can come and tell me that you want to educate your mind by means of the feeblest of lectures! Lady Mary, are you laughing at us? or are the dry lessons of grammar and such like scaffolding, really of more use in educating the mind than the far higher lessons of life?"

"How you set yourself to discourage me," cried Lady Mary, half angry, half laughing. "That is not what you mean, Mr. Earnshaw. You mean that it is hopeless to train women to the accuracy, the exactness of thought which men are trained to. I understand you, though you put it so much more prettily."

"I am afraid I don't know what ac-

curacy means," said Edgar, "and exactness of thought suggests only Lord Newmarch to me; and Heaven deliver us from prigs, male and female! If you find, however, that the mass of young university men are so accurate, so exact, so accomplished, so trained to think well and clearly, then I envy you your eyes and perceptions—for to me they have a very different appearance; many of them, I should say, never think at all, and know a good deal less than Phil does, of whom I am the unworthy instructor—save the mark!" he added, with a laugh. "On the whole, honours have showered on my head; I have had greatness thrust upon me like Malvolio; not only to instruct Phil, but to help to educate Lady Mary Tottenham! What a frightful impostor I should feel myself if all this was my doing, and not yours."

Lady Mary laughed too, but not without a little flush of offence. It even crossed her mind to wonder whether the young

man had taken more wine than usual? for there was an exhilaration, a boldness, an *élan* about him which she had never perceived before. She looked at him with mingled suspicion and indignation—but caught such a glance from his eyes, which were full of a new warmth, life, and meaning, that Lady Mary dropped hers, confused and confounded, not knowing what to make of it. Had the porter, and the footman, and the under-gardener, who had seen Edgar kiss Lady Mary's hand, been present at that moment, they would certainly have drawn conclusions very unfavourable to Mr. Tottenham's peace of mind. But that unsuspecting personage sat engaged in his own occupation, and took no notice. He was turning over some papers which he had brought back with him from Tottenham's that very day.

"When you two have done sparring," he said—"Time will wait for no man, and here we are within a few days of the entertainment at the shop. Earnshaw, I

wish you would go in with me on Wednesday, and help me to help them in their arrangements. I have asked a few people for the first time, and it will be amusing to see the fine ladies, our customers, making themselves agreeable to my 'assistants.' By-the-way, that affair of Miss Lockwood gives me a great deal of uneasiness. I don't like to send her away. She seemed disposed to confide in you, my dear fellow—"

"I will go and secure her confidence," said Edgar, with that gay readiness for everything which Lady Mary, with such amaze, had remarked already in his tone. Up to this moment he had wanted confidence in himself, and carried into everything the *insouciance* of a man who takes up with friendliness the interests of others, but has none of his own. All this was changed. He was another man, liberated somehow from chains which she had never realised until now, when she saw they were broken. Could her conversation with him

to-day have anything to do with it? Lady Mary was a very clever woman, but she groped in vain in the dark for some insight into the mind of this young man, who had seemed to her so simple. And the less she understood him, the more she respected Edgar; nay, her respect for him began to increase, from the moment when she found out that he was not so absolutely virtuous as she had taken him to be.

Next day, as soon as Phil's lessons were over, Edgar shut himself up, and, with a flush upon his face, and a certain tremor, which seemed to him to make his hand and his writing, by some curious paradox, more firm than usual, began to write letters. He wrote to Lord Newmarch, he wrote to one or two others whom he had known in his moment of prosperity, with a boldness and freedom at which he was himself astonished. He recalled to his old acquaintances, without feeling the least hesitation in doing so, the story of his past life, about which he had been, up to this

moment, so proudly silent, and appealed to them to find him something to do. He wrote, not as a humble suitor does, but as one conscious of no humiliation in asking. The last time he had asked he had been conscious of humiliation; but every shadow of that self-consciousness had blown away from him now. He wondered at himself even, while he looked at those letters closed and directed on his writing-table. What was it that had taken away from him all sense of dislike to this proceeding, all his old inclination to let things go as they would? With that curious tremor which was so full of firmness and force still vibrating through him, he went out, avoiding Phil, who was lying in wait for him, and who moaned his absence like a sheep deprived of its lamb—which, I think, was something like the parental feeling Phil experienced for his tutor—and set out for a long solitary walk across country, leaping ditches and stumbling across ploughed fields, by way of exhausting a little his own

superabundant force and energy. Only a day or two since how dreary was the feeling with which he had left the house, where perhaps, for aught he knew, Gussy was at the moment thinking, with a sickening at his heart which seemed to make all nature dim, how he must never see her again, how he had pledged himself to keep out of the way, never to put himself consciously where he might have even the dreary satisfaction of a look at her. The same pledge was upon him still, and Edgar was ready to keep it to the last letter of his promise; but now it had become a simple dead letter. There was no more force, no more vital power in it, to keep the two apart, who had but one strong wish between them. He could keep it now gaily, knowing that he was in heart emancipated from it. There was nothing he could not have done on that brilliant wintry afternoon, when the sun shone upon him as if he had wanted cheering, and every pool glittered, and the sky

warmed and flushed under his gaze with all the delightful sycophancy of nature for the happy. The dullest afternoon would have been just the same to Edgar. He was liberated, he was inspired, he felt himself a strong man, and with his life before him. Cold winds and dreary skies would have had no effect upon his spirits, and for this reason, I suppose, everything shone on him and flattered. To him that hath, shall be given.

He was not to get back, however, without being roused from this beatific condition to a consciousness of his humanity. As he passed through the village, chance drew Edgar's eye to the house which Lady Mary had noted as that of the doctor, and about which Miss Annetta Baker had discoursed so largely. A cab was at the door, boxes were standing about the steps, and an animated conversation seemed to be going on between two men, one an elderly personage without a hat, who stood on the steps with the air of a

man defending his door against an invader, while another and younger figure, standing in front of the cab, seemed to demand admission. "The new doctor has arrived before the old one is ready to go away," Edgar said to himself, amused by the awkwardness of the situation. He slackened his pace, that the altercation might be over before he passed, and saw the coachman surlily putting back again the boxes upon the cab. The old doctor pointed over Edgar's head to a cottage in the distance, where, he was aware, there was lodgings to be had; and as Edgar approached, the new doctor, as he supposed the stranger to be, turned reluctantly away, with a word to some one in the cab, which also began to turn slowly round to follow him. The stranger came along the broad sandy road which encircled the Green, towards Edgar, who, on his side, approached slowly. What was there in this slim tall figure which filled him with vague reminiscences? He got interested

in spite of himself; was it some one he had known in his better days? who was it? The same fancy, I suppose, rose in the mind of the new-comer. When he turned round for the second time, after various communications with the inmates of the cab, and suddenly perceived Edgar, who was now within speaking distance, he gave a perceptible start. Either his reminiscences were less vague, or he was more prepared for the possibility of such a meeting. He hurried forward, holding out his hand, while Edgar stood still like one stunned. "Dr. Murray?" he said, at last, feeling for the moment as if he had been transported back to Loch Arroch. He was too bewildered to say more.

"You are very much surprised to see me," said Charles Murray, with his half-frank, half-sidelong aspect; "and it is not wonderful. When we met last I had no thought of making any move. But circumstances changed, and a chance threw this in my way. Is it possible that we

are so lucky as to find you a resident here?"

"For the moment," said Edgar; "but indeed I am very much surprised. You are to be Dr. Frank's successor? It is very odd that you should hit upon this village of all the world."

"I hope it is a chance not disagreeable to either of us," said the young doctor, with a glance of the suspicion which was natural to him; "but circumstances once more seem against us," he added hurriedly, going back to the annoyance, which was then uppermost. "Here I have to go hunting through a strange place for lodgings at this hour,—my sister tired by a long journey. By the way, you have not seen Margaret; she is behind in the cab; all because the Franks forsooth, cannot go out of their house when they engaged to do so!"

"But the poor lady, I suppose, could not help it," said Edgar, "according to what I have heard."

"No, I suppose she couldn't help it—on the whole;" he allowed, crossly, "Cabman, stop a moment—stop, I tell you! Margaret, here is some one you have often heard of—our cousin, who has been so good to the dear old granny—Edgar Earnshaw."

Dr. Charles pronounced these last words with a sense of going further than he had ever gone before, in intimacy with Edgar. He had never ventured to call his cousin by his Christian name; and even now it was brought in by a side wind, as it were, and scarcely meant so much as a direct address. Edgar turned with some curiosity to the cab, to see the sister whom he had seen waiting at the station for Dr. Murray some months ago. He expected to see a pretty and graceful young woman; but he was not prepared for the beauty of the face which looked at him from the carriage-window with a soft appealing smile, such as turns men's heads. She was tall, with a slight stoop (though that he could

not see) and wore a hat with a long feather, which drooped with a graceful undulation somewhat similar, he thought, to the little bow she made him. She was pale, with very fine, refined features, a large pair of the softest, most pathetic blue eyes, and that smile which seemed to supplicate and implore for sympathy. There was much in Margaret's history which seemed to give special meaning to the plaintive affecting character of her face; but her face was so by nature, and looked as if its owner threw herself upon your sympathies, when indeed she had no thought of anything of the sort. A little girl of six or seven hung upon her, standing up in the carriage, and leaning closely against her mother's shoulder, in that clinging inseparable attitude, which, especially when child and mother are both exceptionally handsome, goes to the heart of the spectator. Edgar was subjugated at once; he took off his hat and went reverently to the carriage-door, as if she had been a saint.

"It is very pleasant that you should be here, and I am very glad to see you," she said, in soft Scotch accents, in which there was a plaintive, almost a complaining tone. Edgar found himself immediately voluble in his regrets as to the annoyance of their uncomfortable reception, and, ere he knew what he was doing, had volunteered to go with Dr. Charles to the lodgings, to introduce him, and see whether they were satisfactory. He could not quite understand why he had done it, and thus associated himself with a man who did not impress him favourably, as soon as he had turned from the door of the cab, and lost sight of that beautiful face; of course he could not help it, he could not have refused his good offices to any stranger, he said to himself. He went on with his cousin to the cottage, where the landlady curtseyed most deeply to the gentleman from Tottenham's, and was doubly anxious to serve people who were his friends; and before

he left he had seen the beautiful newcomer, her little girl as always standing by her side leaning against her, seated on a sofa by a comfortable fire, and forgetting or seeming to forget, her fatigues. Dr. Charles could not smile so sweetly or look so interesting as his sister; he continued to inveigh against Dr. Franks, and his rashness in maintaining possession of the house.

"But the poor thing could not help it," said Margaret, in her plaintive voice, but not without a gleam of fun (if that were possible without absolute desecration) in her eyes.

"They should not have stayed till the last moment; they should have made sure that nothing would happen," the doctor said, hurrying in and out, and filling the little sitting-room with cloaks and wraps, and many small articles. Margaret made no attempt to help him, but she gave Edgar a look which seemed to say, "Forgive him! poor fellow, he is

worried, and I am so sorry he has not a good temper." Edgar did not know what to make of this angelical cousin. He walked away in the darkening, after he had seen them settled, with a curious feeling, which he could not explain to himself. Was he guilty of the meanness of being annoyed by the arrival of these relatives, who were in a position so different from that of his other friends? Was it possible that so paltry, so miserable a feeling could enter his mind—or what was it? Edgar could render no distinct account to himself of the sensation which oppressed him; but as he walked rapidly up the avenue in the quickly falling darkness, he felt that something had happened, which, somehow or other, he could not tell how, was to affect his future life.

CHAPTER IX.

A YOUTHFUL SOLOMON.

EDGAR felt so strong an inclination to say nothing about the sudden arrival of his cousins, that he thought it best to communicate at once what had happened. He told his hosts at dinner, describing the brother and sister, and Margaret's remarkable beauty, which had impressed him greatly.

"And really you did not know she was so pretty?" Lady Mary said, fixing a searching look upon him. Instant suspicion flashed up in her mind, a suspicion natural to womankind, that his evident admiration meant at least a possibility of

something else. And if she had been consistent, no doubt she would have jumped at this, and felt in it an outlet for all her difficulties, and the safest of all ways of detaching Edgar from any chance of influence over her niece; but she was as inconsistent as most other people, and did not like this easy solution of the difficulty. She offered promptly to call upon the newcomers; but she did not cease to question Edgar about them with curiosity, much sharpened by suspicion. She extracted from him, in full detail, the history of the Murrays, of Margaret's early widowhood, and the special union which existed between her and her brother. Harry Thornleigh had arrived at Tottenham's that day, and the story interested him still more than it did Lady Mary. Poor Harry was glad enough to get away from his father's sole companionship; but he did not anticipate very much enjoyment of the kindred seclusion here. He grasped at Edgar as a drowning man grasps at a rope.

"I say, let's go somewhere and smoke. I have so many things to tell you, and so many things to ask you," he cried, when Lady Mary had gone to bed, and Mr. Tottenham, too, had departed to his private retirement, and Edgar, not knowing, any more than Harry himself did, that young Thornleigh was set over him as a sentinel, to guard him from all possibility of mischief, was but too glad to find himself with an uninstructed bystander, from whom he could have those bare "news" without consciousness or under-current of meaning, which convey so much more information than the scrap of enlightenment which well-meaning friends dole out with more and more sparing hands, in proportion as the feelings of the hearer are supposed to be more or less concerned. Harry was not so ignorant as Edgar thought him. He was not bright, but he flattered himself on being a man of the world, and was far from being uninterested in Gussy's persistent neglect of all possible "opportu-

nities." "A girl don't stand out like that without some cause for it," Harry would have said, sagaciously; but he was too knowing to let it be perceived that he knew.

"There is a deal of difference up at home now," he said. "I don't mean my father—but you can't think what changes Arden has made. Do you like to hear, or don't you like to hear? I'll guide myself accordingly. Very well, then I'll speak. He's on the right side in politics, you know, which you never were, and that's a good thing: but he's done everything you felt yourself bound not to do. Clare don't like it, I don't think. You should see the lot of new villas and houses. Arden ain't a bit like Arden; it's a new spick and span Yankee sort of town. I say, what would the old Squire have thought? but Arthur Arden don't care."

"He is right enough, Harry. He was not bound to respect anyone's prejudices."

"Well, there was Clare," said Thorn-

leigh. "They may be prejudices, you know; but I wouldn't spite my wife for money—I don't think. To be sure, if a man wants it badly that's an excuse; but Arden has plenty of money, thanks to you. What a softy you were, to be sure, not to say anything disagreeable! Even if I had had to give up in the end, wouldn't I have made him pay!"

"Never mind that," said Edgar. "Tell me some more news. He hasn't changed the house, I suppose, and they are very happy, and that sort of thing? How is she looking? It is three years since I left, and one likes to hear of old friends."

"Happy?" said Harry, "meaning Mrs. Arden? She's gone off dreadfully; oh, I suppose she's happy enough. You know, old fellow," the young man continued, with a superior air of wisdom, "I don't pretend to believe in the old-fashioned idea of living happy ever after. That's bosh! but I daresay they're just as comfortable as most people. Clare has gone

off frightfully. She's not a bit the girl she was; and of course Arden can't but see that, and a man can't be always doing the lover."

"Is it so?" cried Edgar, with flashing eyes. He got up unconsciously, as if he would have rushed to Clare's side on the spot, to defend her from any neglect. All the old affection surged up in his heart. "My poor Clare!" he said, "and I cannot do anything for you! Don't think me a fool, Harry. She's my only sister, though she doesn't belong to me; and that fellow— What do you mean by gone off? She was always pale."

"Oh, he don't beat her or that sort of thing," said Thornleigh. "She's safe enough. I wouldn't excite myself, if I were you; Mrs. Arden can take care of herself; she'll give as good as she gets. Well, you needn't look so fierce. I don't think, as far as I've heard, that she stood up like that for you."

"She was very good to me," said Edgar,

" better than I deserved, for I was always a trouble to her, with my different ways of thinking; and the children," he added, softly, with an ineffable melting of his heart over Clare's babies, which took him by surprise. " Tell me all you can, Harry. Think how you should feel if you had not heard of your own people for so many years."

" I don't know that I should mind much," said honest Harry; " there are such heaps of them, for one thing; and children ain't much in my way. There's two little things, I believe—little girls, which riles Arden. Helena's got a baby, by the way —did you know?—the rummiest little customer, bald, like its father. Nell was as mad as could be when I said so. By Jove! what fun it was! with a sort of spectacled look about the eyes. If that child don't take to lecturing as soon as it can speak, I'll never trust my judgment again."

Edgar did not feel in a humour to make

any response to young Thornleigh's laughter. He felt himself like an instrument which was being played upon, struck by one rude touch after another, able to do nothing but give out sounds of pain or excitement. He could do nothing to help Clare, nothing to liberate Gussy; and yet Providence had thrust him into the midst of them without any doing of his, and surrounded him once more with at least the reflection of their lives. He let Harry laugh and stop laughing without taking any notice. He began to be impatient of his own position, and to feel a longing to plunge again into the unknown, it did not matter where, and get rid of those dear visions. Excitement brought its natural reaction in a sudden fit of despondency. If he could do nothing—and it was evident he could do nothing—would it not be better to save himself the needless pain, the mingled humiliation and anguish of helplessness? So long as he was here, he could not but ask, he could not but know.

Though the ink was scarcely dry upon the letters he had been writing, the cry for aid to establish himself somehow, in an independent position which he had sent forth to all who could help—a sudden revulsion of feeling struck him, brought out by his despair and sense of impotence. Far better to go away to Australia, to New Zealand, to the end of the world, and at least escape hearing of the troubles he could do nothing to relieve, than to stay here and know all, and be able to do nothing. An instrument upon which now one strain of emotion, now another, was beaten out—that was the true image. Lady Mary had played upon him the other day, eliciting all sorts of confused sounds, wound up by a sudden strain of rapture; and now Harry struck the passive cords, and brought forth vaguer murmurs of fury, groans of impotence, and pain. It would not do. He was not a reed to be thus piped upon, but a man suffering, crying out in his pain, and he must make an end

of it. Thus he thought, musing moodily, while Harry laughed over his sister's bald baby. Harry himself was a dumb Memnon, whom no one had ever woke into sound, and he did not understand anything about his companion's state of mind.

"Have you come to an end of your questions?" he said. "You ain't so curious as I expected. Now here goes on my side? First and foremost, in the name of all that's wonderful, how did you come here?"

Edgar shrugged his shoulders. "You will do me a better service if you will tell me how to get out of here," he said. "I was a fool to stay. To tell the truth, I had not woke up to any particular interest in what became of me. I had only myself to think of; but I can't bear to remember them all, and have nothing to do with them—that's the truth."

"You must make up your mind to that, old fellow," said Harry, the philosopher; "few people get just all they want. But you can't go and run away for that. You

shouldn't have run away at the first. It's the coming back that does it. *I* know. You thought it was all over and done with, and that you could begin straight off, without coming across old things and old faces. I've turned over about as many new leaves, and made about as many fresh starts as most people, and I can feel for you. It ain't no manner of use; you can't get done with one set of people and take up with another; the old ones are always cropping up again," said Harry, oracularly. "You've got to make up your mind to it. But I must say," he added, changing his tone, "that of all places in the world for getting shut of the past, to come here!"

"I was a fool," said Edgar, with his head between his hands. Up to this moment he had thought of Harry Thornleigh as a somewhat stupid boy. Now the young man of the world had the better of him. For the first time he fully realised that he had been foolish in coming here, and had placed himself in an exceptionally difficult

position by his own act, and not by the action of powers beyond his control, as he thought. In short, he had allowed himself to be passive, to drift where the current led him, to do what was suggested, to follow any one that took it upon him to lead. I suppose it is consistent with the curious vagaries of human nature that this sudden sense of his impotence to direct his fate should come just after the warm flush of self-assertion and self-confidence which had made him feel his own fate to be once more worth thinking of. Harry, elevated on his calm height of matter-of-fact philosophy, had never in his life experienced so delightful a sense of capacity to lecture another, and he did not lose the opportunity.

"Don't be down about it," he said, condescendingly. "Most fellows make some mistake or other when they come to again after a bad fall. The brain gets muzzy, you know; and between a stark staring

madman like old Tottenham, and a mature Syren like Aunt Mary, what were you to do? *I* don't blame you. And now you've done it, you'll have to stick to it. As for Clare Arden, I shouldn't vex myself about her. She knew the kind of fellow she was marrying. Besides, if a man was to put himself out for all his sisters, good Lord! what a life he'd have. I don't know that Helena's happy with that professor fellow. If she ain't, it's her own business; she would have him. And I don't say Clare's unhappy. She's not the sort of person to go in for domestic bliss, and make a show of herself. Cheer up, old fellow; things might be a deal worse. And ain't old Tottenham a joke? But, by-the-way, take my advice; don't do too much for that little cub of his. He'll make a slave of you, if you don't mind. Indeed," said Harry, lighting a fresh cigar, "they'll all make a slave of you. Don't you let my lady get the upper hand. You can always manage a woman if you take a little trouble, but

you must never let her get the upper hand."

"And how do you manage a woman, oh, Solomon?" said Edgar, laughing, in spite of himself.

"I've had a deal of experience," said Harry, gravely; "it all depends on whether you choose to take the trouble. The regular dodge about young men having their fling, and that sort of thing, does for my mother; she's simple, poor dear soul. Aunt Mary wants a finer hand. Now you have the ball at your feet, if you choose to play it; only make a stand upon your mind, and that sort of thing, and she'll believe you. She wouldn't believe me if I were to set up for a genius, 'cause why? that's not my line. Be *difficile*," said Harry, imposingly, very proud of his French word; "that's the great thing; and the more high and mighty you are, the more she'll respect you. That's my advice to *you*. As for dear old Tottenham, you can take your choice, anything will do for him; he's

the best old fellow, and the greatest joke in the world."

With this Harry lit his candle and marched off to bed, very well pleased with himself. He had done all that Lady Augusta had hoped for. So far as his own family were concerned, he had comported himself like a precocious Macchiavelli. He had named no names, he had made no allusions, he had renewed his old friendship as frankly as possible, without however indulging Edgar in a single excursion into the past. He had mentioned Helena, who was perfectly safe and proper to be mentioned, a sign that he talked to his old friend with perfect freedom; but with the judgment of a Solomon he had gone no further. Not in vain did Harry flatter himself on being a man of the world. He was fond of Edgar, but he would have considered his sister's choice of him, in present circumstances, as too ludicrous to be thought of. And there can be little doubt that Harry's demeanour had an in-

fluence upon Edgar far more satisfactory for Lady Augusta than her sister's intervention had been. All the visionary possibilities that had revealed themselves in Lady Mary's warning, disappeared before the blank suavity of Harry. In that friendly matter-of-fact discussion of his friend's difficulties, he had so entirely left out the chief difficulty, so taken it for granted that nothing of the kind existed, that Edgar felt like a man before whom a blank wall has suddenly risen, where a moment before there were trees and gardens. Harry's was the man's point of view, not the woman's. Those regrets and longings for what might have been, which Lady Mary could not prevent from influencing her, even when she sincerely wished that the might have been should never be, were summarily extinguished in Harry's treatment. Of course the old must crop up, and confront the new, and of course the complication must be faced and put up with, not run away from. Such

was the young man of the world's philosophy. Edgar sat long after he was gone, once more feeling himself the instrument on which every one played, rather than a conscious actor in the imbroglio. The image got possession of his fanciful brain. Like the thrill of the chords after the hand that struck them had been withdrawn, he seemed to himself to keep on vibrating with long thrills of after sensation, even when the primary excitement was over. But words are helpless to describe the thousand successive changes of feeling of which the mind is capable at a great crisis, especially without immediate power to act one way or another. Edgar, in despair, went and shut himself into the library and read, without knowing well what he read. The passage of those long processions of words before his eyes, gave him a certain occupation, even if they conveyed but little meaning. How easy it would be to do anything; how difficult it was to bear, and go on, and wait!

All this, perhaps, might be easier to support if life were not so cruelly ironical. That morning Edgar, who felt his own position untenable, and whose future seemed to be cut off under his feet—who felt himself to be standing muffled and invisible between two suffering women, each with the strongest claim upon him, for whom he could do nothing—was carried off to assist in getting up an entertainment at Mr. Tottenham's shop. Entertainments, in the evening—duets, pieces on the cornet, Trial Scene from Pickwick; and in the morning, lectures, the improvement of Lady Mary Tottenham's mind, and the grand office of teaching the young ladies of Harbour Green to think! What a farce it all seemed! And what an insignificant farce all the lighter external circumstances of life always seem to the compulsory actors in them, who have, simultaneously, the tragedy or even genteel comedy of their own lives going on, and all its most critical threads running through the larger

lighter foolish web, which concerns only the outside of man. The actor who has to act, and the singer who has to sing, and the romancist who has to go on weaving his romance through all the personal miseries of their existence, is scarcely more to be pitied than those unprofessional sufferers who do much the same thing, without making any claim, or supposing themselves to have any right to our sympathy. Edgar was even half-glad to go, to get himself out of the quiet, and out of hearing of the broken bits of talk which went on around him; but I do not think that he was disposed to look with a very favourable eye on the entertainment at Tottenham's, or even on the benevolent whimsey of the owner of that enormous shop.

CHAPTER X.

HARRY.

HARRY THORNLEIGH was anything but content to be left alone at Tottenham's. He proposed that he should accompany Edgar and Mr. Tottenham, but the latter personage, benevolent as he was, had the faculty of saying No, and declined his nephew's company. Then he wandered all about the place, looked at the house, inspected the dogs, strolled about the plantations, everything a poor young man could do to abridge the time till luncheon. He took Phil with him, and Phil chattered eternally of Mr. Earnshaw.

"I wish you wouldn't call him by that objectionable name," said Harry.

"It's a capital good name," cried Phil. "I wish you could see their blazon, in Gwillim. Earnshaw says it ain't his family; but everybody says he's a great swell in disguise, and I feel sure he is."

"Hallo!" said Harry, idly, "what put that into your head? It's all the other way, my fine fellow."

"I don't know what you mean by the other way. His name wasn't always Earnshaw," said Phil, triumphantly. "They've got about half a hundred quarterings, real old gentry, not upstarts like us."

"That's admirable," said Harry. "I suppose that's what you study all the time you are shut up together, eh?"

"No, he don't care for heraldry, more's the pity," said Phil. "I can't get him to take any interest. It's in other ways he's so jolly. I say, I've made up a coat for us, out of my own head. Listen! First and fourth, an ellwand argent; second and third, three shawls proper— But you don't understand, no more than Earn-

shaw does. I showed it to the mother, and she boxed my ears."

"Serve you right, you little beggar. I say, Phil, what is there to do in this old place. I'm very fond of Tottenham's in a general way, but I never was here in winter before. What are you up to, little 'un? There's the hounds on Thursday, I know; but Thursday's a long way off. What have you got for a fellow to do, to-day?"

"Come up to the gamekeeper's and see the puppies," said Phil; "it's through the woods all the way. Earnshaw went with me the other day. They're such jolly little mites; and if you don't mind luncheon very much, we can take a long stretch on to the pond at Hampton, and see how it looks. It's shallower than our pond here."

"I don't care for a muddy walk, thanks," said Harry, contemplating his boots, "and I do mind luncheon. Come along, and I'll teach you billiards, Phil. I suppose there's a billiard table somewhere about."

"Teach me!" cried Phil, with a great

many notes of admiration; "why, I can beat Earnshaw all to sticks!"

"If you mention his name again for an hour, I'll punch your head," cried Harry, and strolled off dreamily to the billiard-room, Phil following with critical looks. The boy liked his cousin, but at the same time he liked to have his say, and did not choose to be snubbed.

"What a thing it is to have nothing to do!" he said, sententiously. "How often do you yawn of a morning, Harry? We're not allowed to do that. Earnshaw—"

"You little beggar! didn't I promise to punch your head?" cried Harry; and they had an amiable struggle at the door of the billiard-room, by which Phil's satirical tendencies were checked for the moment.

"Aint you strong, just!" Phil said, after this trial, with additional respect.

But notwithstanding the attractions of the billiard-table, Harry, yawning, stalked into luncheon with an agreeable sense of

variety. "When you have nothing else to do, eat," he said, displaying his wisdom in turn, for the edification of Phil. "That's a great idea; I learned it at Oxford where it's very useful."

"And not very much else, acknowledge, Harry," said Lady Mary.

"Well, as much as I was wanted to learn. You are very hard upon a fellow, Aunt Mary. John, I allow, was intended to do some good; but me, no one expected anything from me—and why should a fellow bother his brains when he hasn't got any, and doesn't care, and nobody cares for him? That's what I call unreasonable. I suppose you'll keep poor Phil at high pressure, till something happens. It ain't right to work the brain too much at his age."

"What about John?" said Lady Mary, "he has gone back to Oxford and is working in earnest now, isn't he? Your mother told me—"

"Poor dear old mother, she's so easy taken in, it's a shame. Yes, he's up at old Christ Church, sure enough; but as for work! when a thing ain't in a fellow, you can't get it out of him," said Harry oracularly. "I don't say that *that* isn't rather hard upon the old folks."

"You are a saucy boy to talk about old folks."

"Well, they ain't young," said Harry calmly. "Poor old souls, I'm often sorry for them. We haven't turned out as they expected, neither me nor the rest. Ada an old maid, and Gussy a "Sister," which is another name for an old maid, and Jack ploughed, and me—well, I'm about the best if you look at it dispassionately. By the way, no, little Mary's the best. There is one that has done her duty; but Granton has a devil of a temper though they don't know it. On the whole, I think the people who have no children are the best off."

"Upon what facts may that wise conclusion rest?" said Lady Mary.

"I have just given you a lot of facts; me, Jack, Ada, Gussy, and you may add, Helena. Five failures against one success; if that ain't enough to make life miserable I don't know what is. I am very sorry for the Governor; my mother takes it easier on the whole, though she makes a deal more fuss; but it's deuced hard upon him, poor old man. The Thornleighs don't make such a figure in the county now as they did in his days; for it stands to reason that eight children, with debts to pay, &c., takes a good deal out of the spending-money; and of course the old maids of the family must come upon the estate."

"When you see the real state of the case so plainly," said Lady Mary, "and express yourself so sensibly—don't you think you might do something to mend matters, and make your poor father a little happier?"

"Ah, that's different," said Harry, "I've turned over so many new leaves I don't believe in them now. Besides a fellow gets into a groove and what is he to do."

"Phil, if you have finished your lunch, you and Molly may run away and amuse yourselves," said Lady Mary, feeling that here was an opportunity for moral influence. The two children withdrew rather unwillingly, for like all other children they were fond of personal discussions, and liked to hear the end of everything. Harry laughed as they went away.

"You want to keep Phil out of hearing of my bad example," he said, "and you are going to persuade me to be good, Aunt Mary; I know all you're going to say. Don't you know I've had it all said to me a hundred times? Don't bother yourself to go over the old ground. May I have the honour of attending your ladyship anywhere this afternoon, or won't

you have me, any more than Mr. Tottenham?"

"Oh, Harry, you're a sad boy," said Lady Mary, shaking her head. She had thought, perhaps, that she might have put his duty more clearly before him than any previous monitor had been able to do, for we all have confidence in our own special powers in this way; but she gave up judiciously when she saw how her overture was received. "I am going to the village," she said, "to call upon those new people, Mr. Earnshaw's cousins."

"Oh, the beauty!" cried Harry with animation, "come along! Sly fellow to bring her here, where he'll be always on the spot."

"Ah, that was my first idea; but he knew nothing of it. To tell the truth," said Lady Mary, "I wish it were so; I should be a good deal easier in my mind, and so would your mother if I could believe he was thinking seriously of anyone —in his own rank of life."

"Why, I thought you were a democrat, and cared nothing for rank; I thought you were of the opinion that all men are equal, not to speak of women—"

"Don't talk nonsense, Harry; an abstract belief, one way or other, has nothing to do with one's family arrangements. I like Mr. Earnshaw very much; he is more than my equal, for he is an educated man, and knows much more than I do, which is my standard of position; but still, at the same time, I should not like him—in his present circumstances—to enter my family—"

"Though a few years ago we should all have been very glad of him," said Harry. "Oh, *I* agree with you entirely, Aunt Mary. If Gussy is such a fool she must be stopped, that's all. I'd have no hesitation in locking her up upon bread and water rather than stand any nonsense. I'd have done the same by Helena if I'd had my way."

"How odd," said Lady Mary, veering

round instantly, and somewhat abashed to find herself thus supported, "and yet you are young, and might be supposed to have some sort of sympathy—"

"Not a bit," cried Harry, "I don't mind nonsense; but as soon as it gets serious I'm serious too. If this fellow, whom you call Earnshaw, has any notions of that kind I'll show him the difference. Oh, yes, I like him; but you may like a fellow well enough, and not give him your sister. Besides, what made him such a fool as to give up everything? He might have fought it out."

"Harry, you are very worldly—you do not understand generous sentiments—"

"No, I don't," said Harry stoutly, "what's the good of generous sentiments if all that they bring you to is tutorizing in a private family? I'd rather put my generous sentiments in my pocket and keep my independence. Hallo, here's your pony carriage. Shall you drive, or shall I?"

Lady Mary was crushed by her nephew's straightforward worldliness. Had she been perfectly genuine in her own generosity, I have no doubt she would have metaphorically flown at his throat; but she was subdued by the consciousness that, much as she liked Edgar, any sort of man with a good position and secure income would appear to her a preferable husband for Gussy. This sense of weakness cowed her, for Harry, though he was stupid intellectually, was more than a match for his aunt in the calm certainty of his sentiments on this point. He was a man of the world, disposed to deal coolly with the hearts and engagements of his sisters, which did not affect him personally, and quite determined as to the necessary character of any stranger entering his family, which did affect him.

"I will have no snobs or cads calling me brother-in-law," he said. "No, he ain't a snob nor a cad; but he's nobody, which is just the same. It's awfully good

of you to visit these other nobodies, his relations. Oh, yes, I'll go in with you, and see if she's as pretty as he said."

The lodging in which Dr. Murray had established himself and his sister, so much against his will, was a succession of low-roofed rooms in a cottage of one story, picturesque with creepers and heavy masses of ivy, but damp, and somewhat dark. The sitting-room was very dim on this wintry afternoon. It was a dull day, with grey skies and mist; the two little windows were half obscured with waving branches of ivy, and the glimmer of the fire flickered into the dark corners of the dim green room. You could scarcely pass from the door to the fireplace without dragging the red and blue tablecloth off the table, or without stumbling against the sofa on one side, or the little chiffonier on the other. When Lady Mary went in, like a queen to visit her subjects, two figures rose simultaneously to meet her. Margaret had been seated in the recess of the window to catch

the last rays of the afternoon, and she let her work drop hurriedly out of her fingers, and rose up, undecipherable, except in outline, against the light. Dr. Charles rose too in the same way against the firelight. Neither of the four could make each other out, and the strangers were embarrassed and silent, not knowing who their visitor was. Lady Mary, however, fortunately was equal to the occasion. She introduced herself, and mentioned Edgar, and introduced her nephew, all in a breath. "I am so sorry you should have had so uncomfortable a reception," she said, "but you must not be angry with poor Mrs. Franks, for it could not be helped."

"Oh, no, it could not be helped," they both said, in unison, with low Scotch voices, the accent of which puzzled Lady Mary; and then Margaret added, still more softly, "I am sorry for her, poor woman, stopped at such a moment." The voice was very soft, shy, full of self-consciousness and embarrassment. Harry stood by

the window, and looked out, and felt more bored than ever. He had come to see a beauty, and he saw nothing but the little grass-plot before the cottage door, shut in by bushes of holly and rhododendron. And Lady Mary went on talking in a sort of professional lady-of-the-manor strain, telling Dr. Murray what he had to look forward to, and wherein Dr. Franks had been deficient.

"You will find it a very good house, when you can get in to it," she said, "and a pleasant neighbourhood;" and then in the little pause that followed these gracious intimations, Edgar's name was introduced, and the mutual surprise with which his cousins and he had met; while the brother and sister explained, both together, now one strange soft voice breaking in, now the other, how much and how little they knew of him, Harry still stood leaning on the window, waiting, with a little impatience, till his aunt should have got through her civilities. But just then the mistress of

the cottage appeared, holding in both hands a homely paraffin lamp, by no means free of smell, which she placed on the table, suddenly illuminating the dim interior. Harry had to move from the window while she proceeded to draw down the blinds, and thus of a sudden, without warning or preparation, he received the electric shock which had been preparing for him. Margaret had seated herself on the end of the little sofa close to the table. She had raised her eyes to look at him, probably with something of the same curiosity which had brought him to the cottage —Lady Mary's nephew, a person in the best society, could not be without interest to the new comers. Margaret looked up at him with the unconscious look of appeal which never went out of her beautiful eyes. The young man was, to use his own language, struck "all of a heap." He thought she was asking something of him. In his hurry and agitation, he made a step towards her.

"You were asking—" cried Harry, eagerly, affected as he had never been in his life before. What was it she wanted? He did not stop to say to himself how beautiful she was. He felt only that she had asked him for something, and that if it were the moon she wanted, he would try to get it for her. His sudden movement, and the sound of his voice, startled Lady Mary too, who could not make out what he meant.

"I did not say anything," said Margaret, in the slightly plaintive voice which was peculiar to her, with a smile, which seemed to the young man like thanks for the effort he had made. He took a chair, and drew it to the table, not knowing what he did. A sudden maze and confusion of mind came over him, in which he felt as if some quite private intercourse had gone on between this stranger and himself. She had asked him, he could not tell for what—and he had thrown his whole soul into the attempt to get it for her; and she had

thanked him. Had this happened really, or was it only a look, a smile that had done it? The poor boy could not tell. He drew his chair close to the table to be near her. She was not a stranger to him; he felt at once that he could say anything to her, accept anything from her. He was dazed and stunned, yet excited and exhilarated by her mere look, he could not tell why.

And the talk went on again. Harry said nothing; he sat casting a glance at her from time to time, eager, hoping she would ask that service from him once more. Perhaps Margaret was accustomed to produce this effect upon strangers. She went on in her plaintive voice, telling how little she knew of Edgar, and what he had done for his family, in an even flow of soft speech, answering all Lady Mary's questions, not looking at the new worshipper—while Dr. Murray, in his embarrassed way, anxious to make a good impression, supplemented all his sister said. Margaret was not embarrassed; she was shy, yet

frank; her eyes were cast down generally as she talked, over the work she held in her hands, but now and then she raised them to give emphasis to a sentence, looking suddenly full in the face of the person she was addressing. It was her way. She renewed her spell thus from moment to moment. Even Lady Mary, though she had all her wits about her, was impressed and attracted; and as for poor Harry, he sat drawing his chair closer and closer, trying to put himself so near as to intercept one of those glances which she raised to Lady Mary's face.

"Our old mother brought us up," she said. "I cannot tell how good she was to Charles and me, and what it cost us not to be rich enough to help her."

"Margaret," said Dr. Charles, "Lady Mary cannot care to hear all this about you and me."

"Oh, pray go on, I am so much interested," said Lady Mary.

"For we have never been rich, never

anything but poor," said Margaret, suddenly lifting her beautiful eyes, and thus giving double effect to the acknowledgment; while her brother fretted a little, and moved on his chair with impatience of her frankness.

"We have been able to make our way," he said, in an under-tone.

"You see, I have always been a drag on him, I and my little girl," she went on, with a soft sigh, "so that he was not able to help when he wanted to help. And then Mr. Earnshaw came in, and did all, and more than all, that Charles could have hoped to do. For this we can never think too highly of him, never be grateful enough."

"It was what any fellow would have done," interrupted Harry, putting his head forward. He did not know what he was saying. And Lady Mary, suddenly looking at him, took fright.

"Thank you so much for telling me this," she said, rising. "I am so glad to

hear another good thing of Mr. Earnshaw, who is one of my first favourites. For his sake you must let me know if there is anything I can do to make you comfortable. Harry, it is time for us to go; it will be quite dark in the avenue. Pardon me, Dr. Murray, but I don't know your sister's name; foolishly, I never thought to ask?"

"Mrs. Smith," said Dr. Charles, as they both got up, filling the little dark room with their tall figures. Harry did not know how he made his exit. One moment, it seemed to him he was surrounded with an atmosphere of light and sadness from those wonderful blue eyes, and the next was driving along the darkling road, with the sound of the wheels and the ponies' hoofs ringing all about him, and unsympathetic laughter breaking from under Lady Mary's veil by his side.

"Mrs. Smith!" she cried; "what a prodigious anti-climax! It was all I could do to keep my gravity till I got outside. That wonderful creature with such eyes,

and her pretty plaintive voice. It is too absurd. Mrs. Smith!"

"You seem to enjoy the joke!" said Harry, stiffly, feeling offended.

"Enjoy the joke! don't you? But it was rather a shock than a joke. What a pretty woman! what a pretty voice! It reminds me of blue-bells and birch trees, and all kinds of pleasant things in Burns and Scott. But Mrs. Smith! And how that lamp smelt! My dear Harry, I wish you would be a little more cautious, or else give me the reins. I don't want to be upset in the mud. Mrs. Smith!"

"You seem to be mightily amused," said Harry, more gruff than ever.

"Yes, considerably; but I see you don't share my amusement," said Lady Mary, still more amused at this sudden outburst of temper, or propriety, or whatever it might be.

"I always thought you were very sympathetic, Aunt Mary," said the young man, with a tone of dignified reproof. "It

is one of the words you ladies use to express nothing particular, I suppose? The girls are always dinning it into my ears."

"And you think I don't come up to my character, Harry?"

"I don't understand your joke, I confess," said Harry, with the loftiest superiority, drawing up at the great hall door.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN.

MR. TOTTENHAM came back from town that evening alone. He explained that Earnshaw had stayed behind on business. "Business partly mine, and partly his own; he's the best fellow that ever lived," was all the explanation he gave to his wife; and Lady Mary was unquestionably curious. They talked a great deal about Edgar at dinner that evening, and Phil made himself especially objectionable by his questions and his indignation.

"He hasn't been here so long that he should go away," said Phil. "Don't

he like us, papa? I am sure there is something wrong by your face."

"So am I," said little Molly. "You only look like that when some one has been naughty. But this time you must have made a mistake. Even you might make a mistake. To think of Mr. Earnshaw being naughty, like one of us, is ridiculous."

"Naughty!" cried Phil. "Talk of things you understand, child. I'd like to know what Earnshaw is supposed to have done," cried the boy, swelling with indignation and dignity, with tears rising in his eyes.

"I've locked him up in the dark closet in the shop till he will promise to be good," said the father, with a laugh; "and if you will throw yourself at my feet, Molly, and promise to bear half of his punishment for him, I will, perhaps, let him out to-morrow."

Little Molly half rose from her chair. She gave a questioning glance at her

mother before she threw herself into the breech; while Phil, reddening and wondering, stood on the alert, ready to undertake he knew not what.

"Nonsense, children; sit down; your father is laughing at you. Seriously, Tom, without any absurdity, what is it?" cried Lady Mary. "I wanted him so to-morrow to hear the first lecture—and he did not mean to stay in town when he left here this morning."

"It is business, mere business," repeated Mr. Tottenham. "We are not all fine ladies and gentlemen, like you and Phil, Molly. Some of us have to work for our living. If it hadn't been for Earnshaw, I should, perhaps, have stayed myself. I think we had better stay in town the night of the entertainment, Mary. It will be a long drive for you back here, and still longer for the children. They are going to have a great turn out. I have been writing invitations all day to the very finest of people. I don't suppose

Her Grace of Middlemarch ever heard anything so fine as Mr. Watson's solo on the cornet. And, Phil, I rely on you to get an encore."

"Oh! I like old Watson. I'll clap for him," cried Phil, with facile change of sentiments; though little Molly kept still eyeing her father and mother alternately, not quite reassured. And thus the conversation slid away from Edgar to the usual crotchets of the establishment.

"We have settled all about the seats, and about the refreshments," said Mr. Tottenham, with an air of content. "You great people will sit in front, and the members of the establishment who are non-performers, on the back seats; and the grandest flunkies that ever were seen shall serve the ices. Oh! John is nothing to them. They shall be divinely tall, and powdered to their eyebrows; in new silk stockings taken from our very best boxes, for that night only. Ah, children, you don't know what is before you! Miss

Jemima Robinson is to be Serjeant Buzfuz. She is sublime in her wig. She is out of the fancy department, and is the best of saleswomen. We are too busy, we have too much to do to spend time in improving our minds, like you and your young ladies, Mary; but you shall see how much native genius Tottenham's can produce."

Harry Thornleigh kept very quiet during this talk. His head was still rather giddy, poor fellow; his balance was still disturbed by the face and the eyes and the look which had come to him like a revelation. It would be vain to say that he had never been in love before; he had been in love a dozen times, lightly, easily, without much trouble to himself or anyone else. But now he did not know what had happened to him. He kept thinking what she would be likely to like, what he could get for her—if, indeed, he ever was again admitted to her presence, and had that voiceless demand made upon him. Oh! what a fool he had been, Harry thought, to waste

his means and forestall his allowance, and spend money for no good, when all the time there was existing in the world a being like that! I don't know what his allowance had to do with it, and neither, I suppose, did Harry; but the thought went vaguely through his head amid a flood of other thoughts equally incoherent. He was glad of Edgar's absence, though he could not have told why; and when Lady Mary began, in the drawing-room after dinner, to describe the new-comer to her husband, he sat listening with glaring eyes till she returned to that stale and contemptible joke about Mrs. Smith, upon which Harry retired in dudgeon, feeling deeply ashamed of her levity. He went to the smoking-room and lit his cigar, and then he strolled out, feeling a want of fresh air, and of something cool and fresh to calm him down. It was a lovely starlight night, very cold and keen. All the mists and heavy vapours had departed with the day, and the sky over Tottenham's was ablaze

with those silvery celestial lights, which woke I cannot tell how many unusual thoughts, and what vague inexplicable emotion and delicious sadness in Harry's mind. Something was the matter with him; he could have cried, though nobody was less inclined to cry in general; the water kept coming to his eyes, and yet his soul was lost in a vague sense of happiness. How lovely the stars were; how stupid to sit indoors in a poky room, and listen to bad jokes and foolish laughter when it was possible to come out to such a heavenly silence, and to all those celestial lights. The Aurora Borealis was playing about the sky, flinging waving rosy tints here and there among the stars, and as he stood gazing, a great shadowy white arm and hand seemed to flit across the heavens, dropping something upon him. What was it? the fairy gift for which those blue eyes had asked him, those eyes which were like the stars? Harry was only roused from his star-

gazing by the vigilant butler, attended by a footman with a lantern, who made a survey of the house every night, to see that all the windows and doors were shut, and that no vagrants were about the premises.

"Beg your pardon, Sir," said that functionary, "but there's a many tramps about, and we're obliged to be careful."

Harry threw away his cigar, and went indoors; but he did not attempt to return to the society of his family. Solitude had rather bored him than otherwise up to this moment; but somehow he liked it that night.

Next morning was as bright and sunshiny as the night had been clear, and Lady Mary was again bound for the village, with Phil and his sister.

"Come with us, Harry; it will do you good to see what is going on," she said.

Harry had no expectation of getting any good, but he had nothing to do, and it seemed possible that he might see or

hear of the beautiful stranger, so he graciously accompanied the little party in their walk. Lady Mary was in high spirits. She had brought all her schemes to completion, and on this day her course of lectures was to begin. Nothing could surpass her own conscientiousness in the matter. No girl graduate, or boy graduate either, for that matter, was ever more determined to work out every exercise and receive every word of teaching from the instructors she had chosen. I do not think that Lady Mary felt herself badly equipped in general for the work of life; indeed, I suppose she must have felt, as most clever persons do, a capability of doing many things better than other people, and of understanding any subject that was placed before her, with a rapidity and clearness which had been too often remarked upon to be unknown to herself. She must have been aware too, I suppose, that the education upon which she harped so much, had not

done everything for its male possessors which she expected it to do for the women whose deficiencies she so much lamented. I suppose she must have known this, though she never betrayed her consciousness of it; but by whatever means it came about, it is certain that Lady Mary was a great deal more eager for instruction, and more honestly determined to take the good of it, than any one of the girls at Harbour Green for whose benefit she worked with such enthusiasm, and who acquiesced in her efforts, some of them for fun, some of them with a half fictitious reflection of her enthusiasm, and all, or almost all, because Lady Mary was the fashion in her neighbourhood, and it was the right thing to follow her in her tastes and fancies. There was quite a pretty assembly in the schoolroom when the party from Tottenham's arrived—all the Miss Witheringtons in a row, and the young ladies from the Rectory, and many other lesser lights.

Harry Thornleigh was somewhat frightened to find himself among so many ladies, though most of them were young, and many pretty.

"I'll stay behind backs, thanks," he said, hurriedly, and took up a position near the door, where Phil joined him, and where the two conversed in whispers.

"They're going to do sums, fancy," said Phil, opening large eyes, "mamma and all! though nobody can make them do it unless they like."

"By Jove!" breathed Harry into his moustache. Amaze could go no further, and he felt words incapable of expressing his sentiments. I don't know whether the spectacle did the young fellow good, but it stupefied and rendered him speechless with admiration or horror, I should not like to say which. "What are they doing it for?" he whispered to Phil, throwing himself in his consternation even upon that small commentator for instruction.

Phil's eyes were screwed tightly in his

head, round as two great O's of amazement; but he only shook that organ, and made no response. I think, on the whole, Phil was the one of all the assembly (except his mother) who enjoyed it most. He was privileged to sit and look on, while others were, before his eyes, subjected to the torture from which he had temporarily escaped. Phil enjoyed it from this point of view; and Lady Mary enjoyed it in the delight of carrying out her plan, and riding high upon her favourite hobby. She listened devoutly while the earliest propositions of Euclid were being explained to her, with a proud and happy consciousness that thus, by her means, the way to think was opened to a section at least of womankind; and what was more, this very clever woman put herself quite docilely at her lecturer's feet, and listened to every word he said with the full intention of learning how to think in her own person—notwithstanding that, apart from her hobby, she had about as much confi-

dence in her own power of thought as most people. This curious paradox, however, is not so uncommon that I need dwell upon it. The other persons who enjoyed the lecture most, were, I think, Myra Witherington, who now and then looked across to her friend Phil, and made up her pretty face into such a delightful copy of the lecturer's, that Phil rolled upon his seat with suppressed laughter; and Miss Annetta Baker, who—there being no possibility of croquet parties at this time of the year—enjoyed the field-day immensely, and nodded to her friends, and made notes of Lady Mary's hat, and of the new Spring dresses in which the Rectory girls certainly appeared too early, with genuine pleasure. The other ladies present did their best to be very attentive. Sometimes a faintly smothered sigh would run through the assembly; sometimes a little cough, taken up like a fugue over the different benches, gave a slight relief to their feelings; sometimes it would be a mere rustle of dresses,

indicative of a slight universal movement. The curate's wife, unable to keep up her attention, fell to adding up her bills within herself, a much more necessary mathematical exercise in her case, but one also which did very little towards paying the same, as poor Mrs. Mildmay knew too well. Miss Franks, the old doctor's eldest daughter, after the first solemnity of the commencement wore off, began to think of her packing, and what nonsense it was of papa to send her here when there was so much to do—especially as they were leaving Harbour Green, and Lady Mary's favour did not matter now. There was one real student, besides Lady Mary, and that was Ellen Gregory, the daughter of the postmistress, who sat far back, and was quite unthought of by the great people, and whose object was to learn a little Euclid for an approaching examination of pupil-teachers, and not in the least the art of thinking. Ellen was quite satisfied as to her powers in that particular; but she

knew the effect that a little Euclid had upon a school-inspector, and worked away with a will, with a mind as much intent as Lady Mary's, and eyes almost as round as Phil's.

From this it will be seen that Lady Mary's audience was about as little prepared for abstract education as most other audiences. When it was over, there was a pleasant stir of relief, and everybody began to breathe freely. The lecturer came from behind his table, and the ladies rose from their benches, and everybody shook hands.

"Oh, it was delightful, Lady Mary!" said the eldest Miss Witherington; "how it does open up one's mental firmament."

"Mr. Thornleigh, will you help me to do the fourth problem?" said Myra. "I don't understand it a bit—but of course you know all about it."

"I!" cried Harry, recoiling in horror, "you don't mean it, Miss Witherington? It's a shame to drag a fellow into this sort

of thing without any warning. I couldn't do a sum to save my life!"

"Lady Mary, do you hear? is it any shame to me not to understand it, when a University man says just the same?" cried Myra, laughing. Poor Harry felt himself most cruelly assailed, as well as ill-used altogether, by being led into this extraordinary morning's work.

"I hope there's more use in a University than that rot," he said. "By Jove, Aunt Mary! I've often heard women had nothing to do—but if you can find no better way of passing your time than doing sums and problems, and getting up Euclid at your time of life——"

"Take him away, for heaven's sake, Myra!" whispered Lady Mary; "he is not a fool when you talk to him. He is just like other young men, good enough in his way; but I can't be troubled with him now."

"Ah!" cried Myra, with an unconscious imitation of Lady Mary's own

manner, which startled, and terrified, and enchanted all the bystanders, "if the higher education was only open to us poor women, if we were not persistently kept from all means of improving ourselves—we might get in time to be as intellectual as Mr. Thornleigh," she added, laughing in her own proper voice.

Lady Mary did not hear the end of this speech; she did not see herself in the little mimic's satire. She was too much preoccupied, and too serious to notice the fun—and the smiles upon the faces of her friends annoyed without enlightening her.

"How frivolous we all are," she said, turning to the eldest Miss Baker, with a sigh; "off at a tangent, as soon as ever the pressure is removed. I am sure I don't want to think it—but sometimes I despair, and feel that we must wait for a new generation before any real education is possible among women. They are all like a set of school-boys let loose."

"My dear Lady Mary, that is what I

am always telling you; not one in a hundred is capable of any intellectual elevation," said the only superior person in the assembly; and they drew near the lecturer, and engaged him in a tough conversation, though he, poor man, having done his duty, and being as pleased to get it over as the audience, would have much preferred the merrier crowd who were streaming — with suppressed laughter, shaking their heads and uttering admonitions to wicked Myra—out into the sunshine, through the open door.

"Don't do that again," cried Phil, very red. "I say, Myra, I like you and your fun, and all that; but I'll never speak to you again, as long as I live, if you take off mamma!"

"I didn't mean it, dear," said Myra, penitent. "I'm so sorry, I beg your pardon, Phil. Lady Mary's a dear, and I wouldn't laugh at her for all the world. But don't you ever mimic anyone, there's

a good boy; for one gets into the habit without knowing what one does."

"Oh, that's all very fine," said Phil, feeling the exhortation against a sin for which he had no capability to be out of place; but he did not refuse to make up the incipient quarrel. As for Harry, he had not listened, and consequently was not aware how much share he had in the cause of the general hilarity.

"I should like to know what all the fun's about," he said. "Good lord! to see you all at it like girls at school! Ladies are like sheep, it seems to me—where one goes you all follow; because that good little aunt of mine has a craze about education, do you all mean to make muffs of yourselves? Well, I'm not a man that stands up for superior intellect and that sort of thing—much; but, good gracious! do you ever see men go in for that sort of nonsense?"

"That is because you are all so much cleverer, and better educated to start

with, Mr. Thornleigh," said Sissy Witherington. He looked up at her to see if she were laughing at him; but Sissy was incapable of satire, and meant what she said.

"Well, perhaps there is something in that," said Harry, mollified, stroking his moustache.

Harry lunched with the Witheringtons at their urgent request, and thus shook himself free from Phil, who was disposed, in the absence of Earnshaw, to attach himself to his cousin. Mrs. Witherington made much of the visitor, not without a passing thought that if by any chance he should take a fancy to Myra—and of course Myra to him, though that was a secondary consideration—why, more unlikely things might come to pass. But Harry showed no dispositions that way, and stood and stared out of the window of the front drawing-room, after luncheon, towards Mrs. Smith's lodgings, on the other side of the Green, with a pertinacity which amazed his hostesses.

When he left them he walked in the same direction slowly, with his eyes still fixed on the cottage with its green shutters and dishevelled creepers. Poor Harry could not think of any excuse for a second call; he went along the road towards the cottage hoping he might meet the object of his thoughts, and stared in at the window through the matted growth of holly and rhododendrons in the little garden, equally without effect. She had been seated there on the previous evening, but she was not seated there now. He took a long walk, and came back again once more, crossing slowly under the windows, and examining the place; but still saw nothing. If Margaret had only known of it, where she sat listlessly inside feeling extremely dull, and in want of a little excitement, how much good it would have done her! and she would not have been so unkind as to refuse her admirer a glance. But she did not know, and Harry went back very unhappy, dull and de-

pressed, and feeling as if life were worth very little indeed to him. Had that heavenly vision appeared, only to go out again, to vanish for ever, from the eyes which could never forget the one glimpse they had had of her? Harry had never known what it was to be troubled with extravagant hopes or apprehensions before.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. SMITH.

"STILL no Mr. Earnshaw," said Lady Mary. "This business of his and yours is a long affair then, Tom. I wanted to send down to those cousins of his to ask them to dinner, or something. I suppose I must write a little civil note, and tell Mrs. Smith why I delay doing so. It is best to wait till he comes back."

"I'll take your note, Aunt Mary," said Harry, with alacrity. "Oh, no, it will not inconvenience me in the least. I shall be passing that way."

"I suppose you want to see the beauty again?" said Lady Mary, smiling. "She is

very pretty. But I don't care much for the looks of the brother. He has an uncertain way, which would be most uncomfortable in illness. If he were to stand on one foot, and hesitate, and look at you like that, to see what you were thinking of him, when some one was ill! A most uncomfortable doctor. I wish we may not have been premature about poor old Dr. Franks."

"Anyhow it was not your doing," said Mr. Tottenham.

Lady Mary blushed slightly. She answered with some confusion: "No, I don't suppose it was." But at the same time she felt upon her conscience the weight of many remarks, as to country practitioners, and doctors of the old school, and men who did not advance with the progress of science even in their own profession, which she had made at various times, and which, no doubt, had gone forth with a certain influence. She had not had it in her power to influence Dr. Franks as to the

person who should succeed him; but she had perhaps been a little instrumental in dethroning the old country doctor of the old school, whose want of modern science she had perceived so clearly. These remarks were made the second day after the lecture, and Edgar had not yet returned. Nobody at Tottenham's knew where he was, or what had become of him; nobody except the master of the house, who kept his own counsel. Harry had made another unavailing promenade in front of Mrs. Smith's lodgings on the day before, and had caught a glimpse of Margaret in a cab, driving with her brother to some patient, following the old lofty gig which was Dr. Franks' only vehicle. He had taken off his hat, and stood at the gate of Tottenham's, worshipping while she passed, and she had given him a smile and a look which went to his heart. This look and smile seemed the sole incidents that had happened to Harry; he could not remember anything else; and when Lady Mary spoke

of the note his heart leaped into his mouth. She had, as usual, a hundred things to do that morning while he waited, interviews with the housekeeper, with the gardener, with the nurse, a hundred irrelevant matters. And then she had her letters to write, a host of letters, at which he looked on with an impatience almost beyond concealment—letters enclosing circulars, letters asking for information, letters about her lectures, about other "schemes" of popular enlightenment, letters to her friends, letters to her family. Harry counted fifteen while he waited. Good lord! did any clerk in an office work harder? "And most of them about nothing, I suppose," Harry said cynically to himself. Luncheon interrupted her in the middle of her labours, and Harry had to wait till that meal was over before he could obtain the small envelope, with its smaller enclosure, which justified his visit. He hurried off as soon as he could leave the table, but not without a final arrangement

of his locks and tie. The long avenue seemed to flee beneath his feet as he walked down, the long line of trees flew past him. His heart went quicker than his steps, and so did his pulse, both of them beating so that he grew dizzy and breathless. Why this commotion? he said to himself. He was going to visit a lady whom he had only seen once before; the loveliest woman he had ever seen in his life, to be sure; but it was only walking so quickly, he supposed, which made him so panting and excited. He lost time by his haste, for he had to pause and get command of himself, and calm down, before he could venture to go and knock at the shabby little green door.

Margaret was seated on the end of the little sofa, which was placed beside the fire. This, he said to himself, no doubt was the reason why he had not seen her at the window. She had her work-basket on the table, and was sewing, with her little girl seated on a stool at her feet. The little

girl was about seven, very like her mother, seated in the same attitude, and bending her baby brows over a stocking which she was knitting. Margaret was very plainly, alas! she herself felt, much too plainly-dressed, in a dark gown of no particular colour, with nothing whatever to relieve it except a little white collar; her dark hair, which she also lamented over as quite unlike and incapable of being coaxed into, the fashionable colour of hair, was done up simply enough, piled high up upon her head. She had not even a ribbon to lend her a little colour. And she was not wise enough to know that chance had befriended her, and that her beautiful pale face looked better in this dusky colourless setting, in which there was no gleam or reflection to catch the eye, than it would have done in the most splendid attire. She raised her eyes when the door opened and rose up, her tall figure, with a slight wavering stoop, looking more and more like a flexile branch or

tall drooping flower. She put out her hand quite simply, as if he had been an old friend, and looked no surprise, nor seemed to require any explanation of his visit, but seated herself again and resumed her work. So did the child, who had lifted its violet eyes also to look at him, and now bent them again on her knitting. Harry thought he had never seen anything so lovely as this group, the child a softened repetition of the mother—in the subdued greenish atmosphere with winter outside, and the still warmth within.

"I came from my aunt with this note," said Harry, embarrassed. She looked up again as he spoke, and this way she had of looking at him only now and then gave a curious particularity to her glance. He thought, poor fellow, that his very tone must be suspicious, that her eyes went through and through him, and that she had found him out. "I mean," he added, somewhat tremulously, "that I was very glad of—of the chance of bringing Lady

Mary's note; and asking you how you liked the place."

"You are very kind to come," said Margaret in her soft voice, taking the note. "It's a little lonely, knowing nobody—and a visit is very pleasant."

The way in which she lingered upon the "very," seemed sweetness itself to Harry Thornleigh. Had a prejudiced Englishman written down the word, probably he would, after Margaret's pronunciation, have spelt it "varry;" but that would be because he knew no better, and would not really represent the sound, which had a caressing, lingering superlativeness in it to the listener. She smiled as she spoke, then opened her letter, and read it over slowly. Then she raised her eyes to his again with still more brightness in them.

"Lady Mary is very kind, too," she said, with a brightning of pleasure all over her face.

"She's waiting for your cousin to come back—I suppose she says so—before asking

you to the house; and I hope it will not be long first, for I am only a visitor here," said Harry impulsively. Margaret gave him another soft smile, as if she understood exactly what he meant.

"You are not staying very long, perhaps?" she said.

"Oh, for some weeks, I hope; I hope long enough to improve my acquaintance with—with Dr. Murray and yourself."

"I hope so too," said Margaret, with another smile. "Charlie is troubled with an anxious mind. To see you so friendly will be very good for him, very good."

"Oh, I hope you will let me be friendly!" cried Harry, with a glow of delight. "When does he go out? I suppose he is busy with the old doctor, visiting the sick people. You were with him yesterday—"

"He thinks it is good for my health to go with him; and then he thinks I am dull when he's away," said Margaret. "He is a real good brother; there are

not many like him. Yes, he is going about with Dr. Franks nearly all the day."

"And you are quite alone, and dull? I am so sorry. I wish you would let me show you the neighbourhood; or if you would come and walk in the park or the wood—my aunt, I am sure, would be too glad."

"Oh, I'm not dull," said Margaret. "I have my little girl. She is all I have in the world, except Charles; and we are great companions, are we no, Sibby?"

This was said with a change in the voice, which Harry thought, made it still more like a wood-pigeon's note."

"Ay are we," said the little thing, putting down her knitting, and laying back her little head, like a kitten, rubbing against her mother's knee. Nothing could be prettier as a picture, more natural, more simple; and though the child's jargon was scarcely comprehensible to Harry, his heart answered to this renewed appeal upon it.

"But sometimes," he said, "you must want other companionship than that of a child."

"Do I?" said Margaret, pressing the little head against her. "I am not sure. After all, I think I'm happiest with her, thinking of nothing else; but you, a young man, will scarcely understand that,"

"Though I am a young man, I think I can understand it," said Harry. He seemed to himself to be learning a hundred lessons, with an ease and facility he was never conscious of before. "But if I were to come and take you both out for a walk, into the woods, or through the park, to show you the country, that would be good both for her and you."

"Very good," said Margaret, raising her eyes, "and very kind of you; but I think I know why you're so very good. You know my cousin, Edgar Earnshaw, too?"

"Yes; I know him very well," said Harry.

"He must be very good, since everybody is so kind that knows him; and fancy, *I* don't know him!" said Margaret. "Charles and he are friends, but Sibby and I have only seen him once. We have scarcely a right to all the kind things that are done for his sake."

"Oh, it isn't for his sake," cried Harry. "I like him very much; but there are other fellows as good as he is. I wouldn't have you make a hero of Edgar; he is odd sometimes, as well as other folks."

"Tell me something about him; I don't know him, except what he did for Granny," said Margaret. "It's strange that, though I am his relative, you should know him so much better. Will you tell me? I would like to know."

"Oh, there's nothing very wonderful to tell," said Harry, somewhat disgusted; "he's well enough, and nice enough, but he has his faults. You must not think that I came for his sake. I came because I thought you would feel a little lonely,

and might be pleased to have some one to talk to. Forgive me if I was presumptuous."

"Presumptuous! no," said Margaret, with a smile. "You were quite right. Would you like a cup of tea? it is just about the time. Sibby, go ben and tell Mrs. Sims we will have some tea."

"She is very like you," said Harry, taking this subject, which he felt would be agreeable, as a new way of reaching the young mother's heart.

"So they tell me," said Margaret. "She is like what I can mind of myself, but gentler, and far more good. For, you see, there were always two of us, Charlie and me."

"You have always been inseparable?"

"We were separated, so long as I was married; but that was but two years," said Margaret, with a sigh; and here the conversation came to a pause.

Harry was so touched by her sigh and her pause, that he did not know how to

show his sympathy. He would have liked to say on the spot, "Let me make it all up to you now;" but he did not feel that this premature declaration would be prudent. And then he asked himself, what did she mean? that the time of her separation from her brother was sad? or that she was sad that it came to an end so soon? With natural instinct, he hoped it might be the former. He was looking at her intently, with interest and sympathy in every line of his face, when she looked up suddenly, as her manner was, and caught him—with so much more in his looks than he ventured to say.

Margaret was half amused, half touched, half flattered; but she did not let the amusement show. She said, gratefully, "You are very kind to take so much interest in a stranger like me."

"I do not feel as if you were a stranger," cried Harry eagerly; and then not knowing how to explain this warmth of expression, he added in haste, "you know

I have known—we have all known your cousin for years."

Margaret accepted the explanation with a smile, "You all? You are one of a family too—you have brothers and sisters like Charles and me?"

"Not like you. I have lots of brothers and sisters, too many to think of them in the same way. There is one of my sisters whom I am sure you would like," said Harry, who had always the fear before his eyes that the talk would flag, and his companion get tired of him—a fear which made him catch wildly at any subject which presented itself.

"Yes?" said Margaret, "tell me her name, and why you think I would like her best."

From this it will be seen that she too was not displeased to keep up the conversation, nor quite unskilled in the art.

"The tea's coming," said little Sibby, running in and taking her seat on her footstool. Perhaps Harry thought he had

gone far enough in the revelation of his family, or perhaps only that this was a better subject. He held out his hand and made overtures of friendship to the little girl.

"Come and tell me your name," he said, "shouldn't you like to come up with me to the house, and play with my little cousins in the nursery? There are three or four of them, little things. Shouldn't you like to come with me?"

"No without mamma," said little Sibby, putting one hand out timidly, and with the other clinging to her mother's dress.

"Oh, no," said Harry, "not without mamma, she must come too; but you have not told me your name. She is shy, I suppose."

"A silly thing," said Margaret, stroking her child's dark hair. "Her name is Sybilla, Sybil is prettier; but in Scotland we call it Sibby, and sometimes Bell for short. Now, dear, you must not hold me,

for the gentleman will not eat you, and here is the tea."

Harry felt himself elected into one of the family, when Mrs. Sims came in, pushing the door open before her, with the tray in her arms; upon which there was much bread and butter of which he partook, finding it delightful, with a weakness common to young men in the amiable company of the objects of their affection. He drew his chair to the table opposite to Margaret, and set Sibby up on an elevated seat at the other side, and felt a bewildering sensation come over him as if they belonged to him. It was not a very high ideal of existence to sit round a red and blue table in a cottage parlour of a winter's afternoon, and eat bread and butter; but yet Harry felt as if nothing so delightful and so elevating had ever happened to him before in all his life.

It was a sad interruption to his pleasure, when Dr. Murray came in shortly afterwards, pushing the door open as Mrs. Sims had done, and entering with the air

of a man to whom, and not to Harry, the place belonged. He had his usual doubtful air, looking, as Lady Mary said, to see what you thought of him, and not sure that his sister was not showing an injudicious confidence in thus revealing to Harry the existence of such a homely meal as tea. But he had no desire to send the visitor away, especially when Margaret, who knew her brother's humour, propitiated him by thrusting into his hand Lady Mary's note.

"I am sure her Ladyship is very kind," he said, his face lighting up, "Margaret, I hope you have written a proper reply."

"When we have had our tea, Charles—will you not have some tea?" his sister said; she always took things so easily, so much more easily than he could ever do.

"Oh, you are having tea with the child, five o'clock tea," said the poor doctor, who was so anxious to make sure that everybody knew him to have been "brought up a gentleman;" and he smiled a bland

uneasy smile, and sat down by Sibby. He would not take any bread and butter, though he was hungry after a long walk; he preferred Harry to think that he was about to dine presently, which was far from being the case. But Harry neither thought of the matter nor cared; he had no time nor attention to spare, though he was very civil to *her* brother, and engaged him at once in conversation, making himself agreeable with all his might.

"I suppose you are making acquaintance with quantities of people, and I hope you think you will like the place," he said.

"Yes, a great many people," said Dr. Charles, "and it was full time that somebody should come who knew what he was doing. Dr. Franks, I am afraid, is no better than an old wife."

"Oh, Charlie, how rashly you speak! he always says out what he thinks," said Margaret with an appealing look at Harry,

"and it is often very far from a wise thing to do."

"Bravo, Aunt Mary will be delighted," cried Harry, "it is what she always said."

"I knew Lady Mary Tottenham was very talented," said Dr. Murray with some pomp, "and that she would see the state of affairs. I can't tell you what a pleasure and support it is to have a discriminating person in the neighbourhood. He is just an old wife. You need not shake your head at me, Margaret, I know Mr. Thornhill is a gentleman, and that he will nor repeat what is said."

"Surely not," said Harry, somewhat surprised to find himself thus put on his honour; "but my name is Thornleigh; never mind, it was a very simple mistake."

The doctor blushed with annoyance, and confounded himself in excuses. Harry took his leave before these apologies were half over. He was rather glad to get

away at the last, feeling that a shadow had come over his happiness; but before he had left the Green, this momentary shade disappeared, and all the bliss of recollection came back upon him. What an hour he had spent, of happiness pure and unalloyed, with so many smiles, so many looks to lay up as treasures! how lovely she was, how simple, how superior to everything he had ever seen before! Talk of fashion, Harry said to himself hotly, talk of rank and society and high birth, and high breeding! here was one who had no need of such accessories, here was a perfect creature, made in some matchless mould that the world had never seen before; and how kindly she had looked at him, how sweetly talked to him! What had he done, that he should have suddenly fallen upon such happiness?

CHAPTER XIII.

IN LOVE.

LIFE had become a new thing altogether for Harry Thornleigh. Up to this time his existence had been that of his immediate surroundings, an outward life so to speak. The history of the visible day in any household of which he formed a part would have been his history, not much more nor less; but this easy external existence was over for him. He began to have a double being from the moment he saw Margaret. All that he was most conscious of, was within him, a life of thought, of recollection, of musing, and imagination; and external matters affected him

but vaguely through the cloud of this more intimate consciousness. Yet his faculties were at the same time quickened, and the qualities of his mind brought out—or so at least he felt. He had been very angry with Lady Mary for her mirth over Mrs. Smith's name; but his new feelings (though they originated this anger) seemed to give him prudence and cleverness enough to make an instrument of the very jest he detested. He began to speak of Mrs. Smith the morning after his visit to her, restraining his temper admirably, and opening the subject in the most good-humoured way.

"I delivered your note, Aunt Mary," he said; "you are right after all, about the name. It is ridiculous. Mrs. Smith! after being Miss Murray, as I suppose she was. She ought to change back again."

"There are other ways of changing," said Lady Mary, "and I daresay such a pretty woman could easily do it if she wished. Yes, I got a very nice little note from her, thanking me. Though I am

disappointed in the brother, I must show them some civility. Did you hear when they were to get into their house?"

Harry had not heard; but he propitiated his aunt by telling her what was Dr. Murray's opinion of his predecessor, an opinion which greatly comforted Lady Mary, and made her feel herself quite justified in the part she had taken in the matter.

"There must be more in him than I thought," she said, in high good-humour; and then Harry felt bold to make his request.

"The sister," he said, toning down the superlatives in which he felt disposed to speak of that peerless being, with an astuteness of which he felt half-ashamed, half-proud, "is rather lonely, I should think, in that poky little place; and she has a nice little girl about Molly's age." (This was a very wild shot, for Harry had about as much idea of their relative ages as he had about the distances between two

stars). "They don't know any one, and I don't think she's very strong. Without asking them formally, Aunt Mary, don't you think you might have her and the child up to luncheon or something, to see the conservatories and all that? it would be a little change for them. They looked rather dismal in Mrs. Sims' parlour, far from everything they know."

"How considerate and kind of you, Harry!" cried Lady Mary. "I am ashamed of myself for not having thought of it. Of course, poor thing, she must be lonely—nothing to do, and probably not even any books. The Scotch all read; they are better educated a great deal than we are. To be sure, you are quite right. I might drive down to-morrow, and fetch her to lunch. But, by-the-by, I have Herr Hartstong coming to-morrow, who is to give the botany lecture—"

"An extra lady and a little girl would not hurt Herr Hartstong."

"There is no telling," said Lady Mary,

with a laugh, "such a pretty creature as she is. But I think he has a wife already. I only meant I could not go to fetch her. But to be sure she's a married woman, and I don't see what harm there would be. *You* might do that."

"With the greatest pleasure," cried Harry, trying with all his might to keep down his exultation, and not let it show too much in his face and voice.

"Then we'll settle it so. You can take the ponies, and a fur cloak to wrap her in, as she's delicate; and Herr Hartstong must take his chance. But, by the way," Lady Mary added, pausing, turning round and looking at him—"by the way, you are of a great deal more importance. You must take care she does not harm *you*."

"Me!" said Harry, with a wild flutter at his heart, forcing to his lips a smile of contempt. "I am a likely person, don't you think, to be harmed by anybody belonging to the country doctor? I thought,

Aunt Mary, you had more knowledge of character."

"Your class exclusivism is revolting, Harry," cried Lady Mary, severely. "A young man with such notions is an anachronism; I can't understand how you and I can come of the same race. But perhaps it's just as well in this case," she added, gliding back into her easier tone. "Your mother would go mad at the thought of any such danger for you."

"I hope I can take care of myself by this time, without my mother's help," said Harry, doing his best to laugh. He was white with rage and self-restraint; and the very sound of that laugh ought to have put the heedless aunt, who was thus helping him on the way to destruction, on her guard. But Lady Mary's mind was occupied by so many things, that she had no attention to bestow on Harry; besides the high confidence she felt in him as an unimpressionable blockhead and heart-hardened young man of the world.

To-morrow, however — this bliss was only to come to-morrow—and twenty-four hours had to be got through somehow without seeing her. Harry once more threw himself in the way persistently. He went down to the village, and called upon all his old acquaintances; he kept about the Green the whole afternoon; but Margaret did not appear. At last, when his patience would hold out no longer, he called at the cottage, saying to himself, that in case Lady Mary had forgotten to write, it would be kind to let her know what was in store for her. But, alas! she was not to be found at the cottage. How she had been able to go out without being seen, Harry could not tell, but he had to go back drearily at night without even a glimpse of her. What progress his imagination had made in three or four days! The very evening seemed darker, the stars less divine, the faint glimmers of the Aurora which kept shooting across the sky had become paltry and unmeaning. If that

was all electricity could do, Harry felt it had better not make an exhibition of itself. Was it worth while to make confusion among the elements for so little? was it worth while to suffer the bondage of society, to go through luncheons and dinners, and all the common action of life without even a glance or a smile to make a man feel that he had a soul in him and a heaven above him? Thus wildly visionary had poor Harry become all in a moment, who had never of his own free will read a line of poetry in his life.

"I am so sorry to give you the trouble, Harry," said Lady Mary, pausing for a moment in her conversation with Herr Hartstong (whose lecture was to be given next morning) to see the ponies go off.

"Oh! I don't mind it once in a way," said the young man, scarcely able to restrain the laughter with which, partly from sheer delight, partly from a sense of the ludicrous inappropriateness of her apology, he was bursting. He went down

the avenue like an arrow, the ponies tossing their heads, and ringing their bells, the wintry sunshine gleaming on him through the long lines of naked trees. Margaret, to whom Lady Mary had written, was waiting for him with a flush of pleasure upon her pale face, and a look of soft grateful friendliness in her beautiful eyes.

"It was kind of you to come for us," she said, looking up at him.

"I am so glad to come," said Harry, with all his heart in his voice. He wrapt her in the warm furs, feeling somehow, with a delicious sense of calm and security, that, for the moment, she belonged to him. "The morning is so fine, and the ponies are so fresh, that I think we might take a turn round the park," he said. "You are not afraid of them?"

"Oh no! the bonnie little beasties," cried Margaret, leaning back with languid enjoyment. She had often harnessed the rough pony at Loch Arroch with her own

hands, and driven him to the head of the loch without thinking of fear, though she looked now so dainty and delicate; but she did not feel inclined to tell Harry this, or even to recall to herself so homely a recollection. Margaret had been intended by nature for a fine lady. She lay back in the luxurious little carriage, wrapped in the furred mantle, and felt herself whisked through the sunny wintry air to the admiration of all beholders, with a profound sense of enjoyment. She liked the comfort dearly. She liked the dreamy pleasure which was half of the mind, and half of the body. She liked the curtseys of the gatekeepers, and the glances of the stray walkers, who looked after her, she thought, with envy. She felt it natural that she should thus be surrounded by things worthy, and pleasant, and comfortable. Even the supreme gratification of the young attendant by her side, whose infatuation began to shew itself so clearly in his eyes, was a climax of pleasure to Margaret, which she accepted

easily without fear of the consequences.

Yes, she thought, he was falling in love with her, poor boy; and it is seldom unpleasant to be fallen in love with. Most probably his people would put a stop to it, and as she did not mean to give him what she called "any encouragement," there would be no harm done. Whereas, on the other hand, if his people did not interfere, there was always the chance that it might come to something. Margaret did not mean any harm—she was only disposed to take the Scriptural injunction as her rule, and to let the morrow care for the things of itself.

She lay back in the little carriage with the grey feather in her hat swaying like her slight figure, and Sibby held fast in her arms.

"I feel as if I were in a nest," she said, when Harry asked tenderly if she felt the cold; and thus they flew round the park, where a little stir of Spring was visible in the rough buds, and

where here and there one dewy primrose peeped forth in a sheltered nook—the ponies' hoofs ringing, and their heads tossing, and their bells tinkling—Harry lost in a foolish joy beyond expression, and she wrapped in delicious comfort. He was thinking altogether of her, she almost altogether of herself—and of her child, who was another self.

"I have enjoyed it so much," she said softly, as he helped her to get out in front of the hall door.

"I do not think I ever spent so happy a morning," Harry said very low.

Margaret made no sign of having heard him. She walked upstairs without any reply, leaving him without ceremony. "He is going too fast," she said to herself. And Harry was a little, just a little, mortified, but soon got over that, and went after her, and was happy once more—happy as the day was long. Indeed, the visit altogether was very successful. Margaret was full of adaptability, very

ready to accept any tone which such a personage as Lady Mary chose to give to the conversation, and with, in reality, a lively and open intelligence, easily roused to interest. Besides, though an eager young admirer like Harry was pleasant enough, and might possibly become important, she never for a moment deceived herself as to the great unlikelihood that his friends would permit him to carry out his fancy; and the chance that, instead of bringing advantage, she might bring harm to herself and her brother if she gave any one a right to say that she had "encouraged" him. Whereas nothing but unmingled good could come from pleasing Lady Mary, who was, in every way, the more important person. This being the principle of Margaret's conduct, it is almost unnecessary to say that Lady Mary found it perfect, and felt that nothing could be in better taste than the way in which the young Scotchwoman kept Harry's attentions down, and accorded

the fullest attention to her own observations. She even took her nephew aside after luncheon, to impress upon him a greater respect for their guest.

"This Mrs. Smith is evidently a very superior person," said Lady Mary, "and I am sorry to see, Harry, that you are rather disposed to treat her simply as a very pretty youug woman. I am not at all sure that you have not been trying to flirt with her during lunch."

"I—flirt!—Aunt Mary," stammered Harry, "you altogether mistake—"

"Oh, of course, you never did such a thing in your life," she said mocking, "but this is not quite an ordinary young lady. The Scotch are so well educated—we can see at a glance that she has read a great deal, and thought as well—which is by no means common. If you take her round the conservatories, you must recollect that it is not a mere pretty girl you are with, Harry. She will not under-

stand your nonsense," said Lady Mary with a little warmth.

She, herself, had some final arrangements to make with Herr Hartstong, who was also very much interested in the graceful listener, from whom he had received such flattering attention. He made her his best bow, and hoped he should see her next day at the lecture, when Harry, doing his best to suppress all manifestations of feeling, led her away.

"It is so kind of you to let me treat you without ceremony," said Lady Mary. "Show Mrs. Smith the orchids, Harry. Before you get to the palm tree, I shall be with you—" and then Harry was free and alone with his enchantress. He could not talk to her—he was so happy—he led her away quickly out of sight of his aunt—who had seated herself in a corner of the big drawing-room, to settle all her final arrangements with the botanist—and of Herr Hartstong's big yellow eyes, which looked after him with suspicion. Harry

was eager to get her to himself, to have her alone, out of sight of everybody; but when he had secured this isolation, he could not make much use of it. He was dumb with bliss and excitement—he took her into the fairy palace of flowers where summer reigned in the midst of winter; and instead of making use of his opportunities in this still perfumy place, where everything suited the occasion, found that he had nothing to say. He had talked, laboriously it is true, but still he had talked, when he had called on her at the cottage; he had made a few remarks while he drove her round the park; but on this, the first opportunity he had of being alone with her, he felt his tongue tied. Instead of taking her to the orchids as Lady Mary had suggested, he conducted her straight to the palm tree, and there placed her on the sofa, and stood by, gazing at her, concealing his agitation by cutting sprays of Cape jasmine, of which there happened to be a

great velvety cluster in front of her seat.

"It is like something in a book," said Margaret, with a sigh. "What a fine thing it is to be very rich! I never was in such a beautiful place."

"Yes, it's nice to be well off," said Harry; "but heaps of people are well off who never could invent anything so pretty. You see Tottenham was very much in love with Aunt Mary. She's a nice little woman," he added, parenthetically. "A man in love will do a deal to please the woman he likes."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Margaret, feeling somewhat disposed to laugh; "and that makes it all the more interesting. Is Mr. Tottenham very poetical and romantic? I have not seen him yet."

"Tottenham poetical!" cried Harry, with a laugh; "no, not exactly. And that's an old affair now, since they've been married about a century; but it shows what even a dull man can do. Don't you think love's a very rum thing?" said the

young man, cutting the Cape jasmine all to pieces; "don't you think so? A fellow doesn't seem to know what he is doing."

"Does Lady Mary let you cut her plants to pieces, Mr. Thornleigh?" said Margaret, feeling her voice quaver with amusement. Upon which Harry stopped short, and looked sheepishly down at the bunch of flowers in his hand.

"I meant to get you a nosegay, and here is a great sheaf like a coachman's bouquet on a drawing-room day," cried Harry, half conscious of this very distinct commentary upon his words. "Never mind, I'll tell the gardener. I suppose there are heaps more."

"How delightful to have heaps more!" said Margaret. "I don't think poor folk should ever be brought into such fairy places. I used to think myself so lucky with a half-a-dozen plants."

"Then you are fond of flowers?" said Harry.

What woman, nay, what civilised person

of the present age, ever made but one answer to such a question? There are a few people left in the world, and only a few, who still dare to say they are not fond of music; but fond of flowers!

"I do so wish you would let me keep you supplied," said Harry, eagerly. "Trouble! it would be the very reverse of trouble; it would be the very greatest pleasure—and I could do it so easily—"

"Are you a cultivator, then?" said Margaret, "a great florist?" she said it with a half-consciousness of the absurdity, yet half deceived by his earnestness. Harry himself was startled for the moment by the question.

"A florist! Oh, yes, in a kind of a way," he said, trying to restrain an abrupt momentary laugh. A florist? yes; by means of Covent Garden, or some ruinous London nurseryman. But Margaret knew little of such refinements. "It would be such a pleasure to me," he said, anxiously. "May I do it? And then you will not be

able quite to forget my very existence."

Margaret got up, feeling the conversation had gone far enough. "May not I see the—orchids? It was the orchids I think that Lady Mary said."

"This is the way," said Harry, almost sullen, feeling that he had fallen from a great height. He went after her with his huge handful of velvety jasmine flowers. He did not like to offer them, he did not dare to strew them at her feet that she might walk upon them, which was what he would have liked best. He flung them aside into a corner in despite and vexation. Was he angry with her? If such a sentiment had been possible, that would have been, he felt, the feeling in his mind. But Margaret was not angry nor annoyed, though she had stopped the conversation, feeling it had gone far enough. To "give him encouragement," she felt, was the very last thing that, in her position, she dared to do. She liked the boy, all the same, for liking her. It gave her a soothing con-

sciousness of personal well-being. She was glad to please everybody, partly because it pleased herself, partly because she was of a kindly and amiable character. She had no objection to his admiration, to his love, if the foolish boy went so far, so long as no one had it in his power to say that she had given him encouragement; that was the one thing upon which her mind was fully made up; and then, whatever came of it, she would have nothing with which to reproach herself. If his people made a disturbance, as they probably would, and put a stop to his passion, why, then, Margaret would not be to blame; and if, on the contrary, he had strength of mind to persevere, or they, by some wonderful chance, did not oppose, why then Margaret would reap the benefit. This seems a somewhat selfish principle, looking at it from outside, but I don't think that Margaret had what is commonly called a selfish nature. She was a perfectly sober-minded unimpassioned woman,

very affectionate in her way, very kind, loving comfort and ease, but liking to partake these pleasures with those who surrounded her. If fate had decreed that she should marry Harry Thornleigh, she knew very well that she would make him an admirable wife, and she would have been quite disposed to adapt herself to the position. But in the meantime she would do nothing to commit herself, or to bring this end, however desirable it might be in itself, about.

CHAPTER XIV.

NO ENCOURAGEMENT.

"YOU must not take any more trouble with me," said Margaret, "my brother will come up for me; it will be quite pleasant to walk down in the gloaming—I mean—" she added, with a slight blush over her vernacular, "in the twilight, before it is quite dark."

"Oh! pray don't give up those pretty Scotch words," said Lady Mary, "gloaming is sweeter than twilight. Do you know I am so fond of Scotch, the accent as well as the words."

Margaret replied only by a dubious smile. She would rather have been com-

plimented on her English; and as she could not make any reply to her patroness' enthusiasm, she continued what she was saying:

"Charles wishes to call and tell you how much he is gratified by your kindness, and the walk will be pleasant. You must not let me give you more trouble."

"No trouble," said Lady Mary, "but you shall have the close carriage, which will be better for you than Harry and the ponies. I hope he did not frighten you in the morning. I don't think I could give him a character as coachman; he all but upset me the other night, when we left your house—to be sure I had been aggravating—eh, Harry?" she said, looking wickedly at him. "It was very good of you to let me have my talk out with the Professor; ladies will so seldom understand that business goes before pleasure. And I hope you will do as he asked, and come to the lecture to-morrow."

"I am not very understanding about lectures," said Margaret.

"Are not you? you look very understanding about everything," said Lady Mary. She too, as well as Harry, had fallen in love with the doctor's sister. The effect was not perhaps so sudden; but Lady Mary was a woman of warm sympathies, and sudden likings, and after a few hours in Margaret's society she had quite yielded to her charm. She found it pleasant to look at so pretty a creature, pleasant to meet her interested look, her intelligent attention. There could not be a better listener, or a more delightful disciple; she might not perhaps know a great deal herself, but then she was so willing to adopt your views, or at least to be enlightened by them. Lady Mary sat by, and looked at her after the promenade round the conservatories, with all a woman's admiration for beauty of the kind which women love. This, as all the world knows, is not every type; but Margaret's

drooping shadowy figure, her pathetic eyes, her soft paleness, and gentle deferential manner, were all of the kind that women admire. Lady Mary "fell in love" with the stranger. They were all three seated in the conservatory in the warm soft atmosphere, under the palm tree, and the evening was beginning to fall. The great fire in the drawing-room shone out like a red star in the distance, through all the drooping greenness of the plants, and they began half to lose sight of each other, shadowed, as this favourite spot was, by the great fan branches of the palm.

"I think there never was such delightful luxury as this," said Margaret, softly. "Italy must be like it, or some of the warm islands in the sea."

"In the South Sea?" said Lady Mary, smiling, "perhaps; but both the South Seas and Italy are homes of indolence, and I try all I can to keep that at arm's length. But I assure you Herr Hartstong

was not so poetical; he gave me several hints about the management of the heat. Do come to-morrow and hear him, my dear Mrs. Smith. Botany is wonderfully interesting. Many people think it a *dilettante* young-lady-like science; but I believe in the hands of a competent professor it is something very different. Do let me interest you in my scheme. You know, I am sure, and must feel, how little means of education there are—and as little Sibby will soon be craving for instruction like my child—"

"I suppose there is no good school for little girls here?" said Margaret, timidly; her tact told her that schools for little girls were not in question; but she did not know what else to say.

"Oh!" said Lady Mary, with momentary annoyance; "for mere reading and writing, yes, I believe there is one; but it is the higher instruction I mean," she added, recovering herself, "probably you have not had your attention

directed to it; and to be sure in Scotland the standard is so much higher, and education so much more general."

Margaret had the good sense to make no reply. She had herself received a solid education at the parish school of Loch Arroch, along with all the ploughboys and milkmaids of the district, and had been trained into English literature and the Shorter Catechism, in what was then considered a very satisfactory way. No doubt she was so much better instructed than her patroness that Lady Mary scarcely knew what the Shorter Catechism was. But Margaret was not proud of this training, though she was aware that the parochial system had long been a credit to Scotland—and would much rather have been able to say that she was educated at Miss So-and-So's seminary for young ladies. As she could not claim any such Alma Mater, she held her tongue, and listened devoutly, and with every mark of interest while Lady Mary's scheme was

propounded to her. Though, however, she was extremely attentive, she did not commit herself by any promise, not knowing how far her Loch Arroch scholarship would carry her in comparison with the young ladies of Harbour Green. She consented only conditionally to become one of Lady Mary's band of disciples.

"If I have time," she said; and then Lady Mary, questioning, drew from her a programme of her occupations, which included the housekeeping, Sibby's lessons, and constant attendance, when he wanted her, upon her brother. "I drive with him," said Margaret, "for he thinks it is good for my health—and then there is always a good deal of sewing."

"But," said Lady Mary, "that is bad political economy. You neglect your mind for the sake of the sewing, when there are many poor creatures to whom, so to speak, the sewing belongs, who have to make their livelihood by working, and

whom ladies' amateur performances throw out of bread."

Thus the great lady discoursed the poor doctor's sister, who but for him would probably have been one of the said poor creatures; this, however, it did not enter into Lady Mary's mind to conceive. Margaret was overawed by the grandeur of the thought. For the first moment, she could not even laugh covertly within herself at the thought of her own useful sewing being classified as a lady's amateur performance. She was silent, not venturing to say anything for herself, and Lady Mary resumed.

"I really must have you among my students; think how much more use you would be to Sibby, if you kept up, or even extended, your own acquirements. Of course, I say all this with diffidence, because I know that in Scotland education is so much more thought of, and is made so much more important than it is with us."

"Oh, no!" cried Margaret. She could not but laugh now, thinking of the Loch Arroch school. And after all, the Loch Arroch school is the point in which Scotland excels England, or did excel her richer neighbour; and the idea of poor Margaret being better educated than the daughter of an English earl, moved even her tranquil spirit to laughter. "Oh, no; you would not think that if you knew," she said, controlling herself with an effort. If it had not been for a prudent sense that it was best not to commit herself, she would have been deeply tempted to have her laugh out, and confide the joke to her companions. As it was, however, this suppressed sense of ridicule was enough to make her uncomfortable. "I will try to go," she said gently, changing the immediate theme, "after the trouble of the flitting is over, when we have got into our house."

Lady Mary fell into the snare. She began to ask about the house, and whether

they had brought furniture, or what they meant to do, and entered into all the details with a frank kindness which went to Margaret's heart. During all this conversation, Harry Thornleigh kept coming and going softly, gliding among the plants, restless, but happy. He could not have her to himself any longer. He could not talk to her; but yet she was there, and making her way into the heart of at least one of his family. While these domestic subjects were discussed, and as the evening gradually darkened, Harry said to himself that he had always been very fond of his aunt, and that she was very nice and sympathetic, and that to secure her for a friend would be wise in any case. It was almost night before Dr. Murray made his appearance, and he was confounded by the darkness of the place into which he was ushered, where he could see nothing but shadows among the plants and against the pale lightness of the glass roofs. I am not sure, for the

moment, that he was not half offended by being received in so unceremonious a way. He stood stiffly, looking about him, till Lady Mary half rose from her seat.

"Excuse me for having brought you here," she said; "this is our favourite spot, where none but my friends ever come."

Lady Mary felt persuaded that she saw, even in the dark, the puffing out of the chest with which this friendly speech was received.

"For such a pleasant reason one would excuse a much worse place," he said, with an attempt at ease, to the amusement of the great lady who was condescending to him. Excuse his introduction to her conservatory! He should never have it in his power to do so again. Dr. Charles then turned to his sister, and said, "Margaret, we must be going. You and the child have troubled her Ladyship long enough."

"I am delighted with Mrs. Smith's

society, and Sibby has been a godsend to the children," said Lady Mary. "Let us go into the drawing-room, where there are lights, and where we can at least see each other. I like the gloaming, your pretty Scotch word; but I daresay Dr. Murray thinks us all rather foolish, sitting like crows in the dark."

She led the way in, taking Margaret's arm, while Margaret, with a little thrill of annoyance, tried through the imperfect light to throw a warning look at her brother. Why did he speak so crossly, he who was never really cross; and why should he say ladyship? Margaret knew no better than he did, and yet instinct kept her from going wrong.

Dr. Murray entered the drawing-room, looking at the lady who had preceded him, to see what she thought of him, with furtive, suspicious looks. He was very anxious to please Lady Mary, and still more anxious to show himself an accomplished man of the world; but he could

not so much as enter a room without this subtle sense of inferiority betraying itself. Harry, coming after him, thought the man a cad, and writhed at the thought; but he was not at all a cad. He hesitated between the most luxurious chair he could find, and the hardest, not feeling sure whether it was best to show confidence or humility. When he did decide at last, he looked round with what seemed a defiant look. "Who can say I have no right to be here?" poor fellow, was written all over his face.

"You have been making acquaintance with your patients? I hope there are no severe cases," said Lady Mary.

"No, none at all, luckily for them—or I should not have long answered for their lives," he said, with an unsteady smile.

"Ah! you do not like Dr. Franks' mode of treatment? Neither do I. I have disapproved of him most highly sometimes; and I assure you," said Lady Mary, in her most gracious tone, "I am so very

glad to know that there is now some one on the spot who may be trusted, whatever happens. With one's nursery full of children, that question becomes of the greatest importance. Many an anxious moment I have had."

And then there was a pause. Dr. Murray was unbending, less afraid of how people looked at him.

"My cousin Mr. Earnshaw has not yet come back?" he said.

"He is occupied with some business in town. I am only waiting, as I told your sister, till he comes. As soon as he does so, I hope we may see more of you here; but in the meantime, Mrs. Smith must come to me. I hope I shall see a great deal of her; and you must spare her for my lectures, Dr. Murray. You must not let her give herself up too much to her housekeeping, and all her thrifty occupations."

"Margaret has no occasion to be overthrifty," he said, looking at her. "I have

always begged her to go into society. We have not come to that, that my sister should be a slave to her housekeeping. Margaret, remember, I hope you will not neglect what her Ladyship says."

"After the flitting," said Margaret, softly.

"Ah, yes; after our removal. We shall then have a room more fit to receive you in," he said. "I hear on all hands that it is a very good house."

At this moment some one came in to announce the carriage, which Lady Mary had ordered to take her visitor home; and here there arose another conflict in Dr. Murray's mind. Which was best, most like what a man of the world would do? to drive down with his sister or to walk? He was tired, and the drive would certainly be the easier; but what if they should think it odd? The doctor was saved from this dilemma by Harry, who came unwittingly to the rescue, and proposed to walk down the avenue with him. Harry

had not fallen in love with him as with his sister; but still he was at that stage when a man is anxious to conciliate everybody belonging to the woman whom he loves. And then little Sibby was brought down from the nursery, clasping closely a doll which had been presented to her by the children in a body, with eyes blazing like two stars, and red roses of excitement upon her little cheeks. Never in all her life before had Sibby spent so happy a day. And when she and her mother had been placed in the warm delicious carriage, is it wonderful that various dreams floated into Margaret's mind as she leant back in her corner, and was whirled past those long lines of trees. Harry had been ready to give her his arm downstairs, to put her into the carriage. He had whispered, with a thrill in his voice:

"May I bring those books to-morrow?"

He had all but brushed her dress with his face, bowing over her in his solicitude. Ah, how comfortable it would be, how delightful to have a house like that, a carriage

like this, admiring, soft-mannered people about her all day long, and nothing to do but what she pleased to do! Had she begun to cherish a wish that Harry's fancy might not be a temporary one, that he might persevere in it, and overcome opposition? It would be hard to expect from Margaret such perfection of goodness as never to allow such a train of thought to enter her mind; but at the same time her practical virtue stood all assaults. She would never encourage him; this she vowed over again, though with a sensation almost of hope, and a wish unexpressed in her heart.

For ah! what a difference there is between being poor and being rich—between Lady Mary in the great house, and Margaret Murray, or Smith, in Mrs. Sims' lodging!—and if you went to the root of the matter, the one woman was as good as the other, as well adapted to "ornament her station," as old-fashioned people used to say. I think, on the whole, it was

greatly to Margaret's credit, seeing that so much was at stake, that she never wavered in her determination to give Harry no encouragement. But she meant to put no barrier definitively in his way, no obstacle insuperable. She was willing enough to be the reward of his exertions, should he be successful in the lists; and Lady Mary's kindness, nay, affectionateness towards her seemed to point to a successful issue of the struggle, if Harry went into it with perseverance and vigour. She could not help being a little excited by the thought.

Lady Mary, on her side, was charmed with her new friend. "The brother may be a cad, as you say, but she is perfection," she said incautiously to Harry, when he came in with a glowing countenance from his walk. "What good breeding, what grace, what charming graceful ways she has! and yet always the simplicity of that pretty Scotch accent, and of the words which slip out now and then. The children are all in raptures with little

Sibby. Fancy making a graceful name like Sybil into such a hideous diminutive! But that is Scotch all over. They seem to take a pleasure in keeping their real refinement in the background, and showing a rough countenance to the world. They are all like that," said Lady Mary, who was fond of generalizations.

Harry did not say much, but he drew a chair close to the fire, and sat and mused over it with sparkling eyes, when his aunt went to dress for dinner. He did not feel capable of coherent thought at all; he was lost in a rapture of feeling which would not go into words. He felt that he could sit there all night long not wishing to budge, to be still, not even thinking, existing in the mere atmosphere of the wonderful day which was now over. Would it come back again? would it prolong itself? would his life grow into a lengthened sweet repetition of this day? He sat there with his knees into the fire, gazing

into the red depths till his eyes grew red in sympathy, until the bell for dinner began to peal through the silent winter air. Mr. Tottenham had come home, and was visible at the door in evening costume, refreshed and warmed after his drive, when Harry, half-blind, rushed out to make a hasty toilette. His distracted looks made his host wonder.

"I hope you are not letting that boy get into mischief," he said to his wife.

"Mischief! what mischief could he get into here?" Lady Mary replied, with a smile; and then they began to talk on very much more important matters—on Herr Hartstong's visit, and the preparations at the Shop, which were now complete.

"I expect you to show a good example, and to treat my people like friends," said Mr. Tottenham.

"Oh, friends!—am not I the head shop-woman?" asked Lady Mary, laughing. "You may be sure I intend to appear so."

The entertainment was to take place on

the next evening, after the botanical lecture at Harbour Green. It was, indeed, likely to be an exciting day, with so much going on.

And when the people at Tottenham's went to dinner, the Murrays had tea, for which they were all quite ready after the sharp evening air. "You were wrong to speak about your housekeeping, and all that," the doctor said, in the mildest of accents, and with no appearance of suspicion, for in the bosom of his family he feared no criticism. "Remember always, Margaret, that people take you at your own estimate. It does not do to let yourself down."

"And it does not do to set yourself up, beyond what you can support," said Margaret. "We are not rich folk, and we must not give ourselves airs. And oh, Charles, one thing I wanted to say. If you wouldn't say ladyship—at least, not often. No one else seems to do it, except

the servants. Don't be angry. I watch always to see what people say."

"I hope I know what to say as well as anyone," said the doctor, with momentary offence; but, nevertheless, he made a private note of it, having confidence in his sister's keen observation. Altogether, the start at Harbour Green had been very successful, and it was not wonderful if both Dr. Charles and his sister felt an inward exhilaration in such a prosperous commencement of their new life.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ENTERTAINMENT AT THE SHOP.

THE botanical lecture passed off very well indeed, and was productive of real and permanent advantage to Harbour Green, by giving to Myra Witherington a totally new study of character. She talked so completely like Herr Hartstong for the rest of the day, that even her mother was deceived, and would not enter the drawing-room till she had changed her cap, in consideration of the totally new voice which she heard proceeding from within. Strange to say, Harry Thornleigh, who last time had been so contemptuous, had now thrown himself most cordially into

Lady Mary's plans, so cordially that he made of himself a missionary to gain new converts for her.

"I will take those books you promised to Mrs. Smith, and try to persuade her to come to the lecture. Is there anyone else I can look up for you, Aunt Mary?" said this reformed character.

"Do, Harry; go to the Red House, and to the Rectory, and tell them half-past twelve precisely. We did not quite settle upon the hour," said Lady Mary. "And you might ask Sissy Witherington to send round to some of the other people; she knows them all. You will meet us at the schoolroom? So many thanks!"

"I shall be there," said Harry, cheerily, marching off with his books under his arm.

If Lady Mary had not been so busy, no doubt she would have asked herself the cause of this wonderful conversion; but with a lecture to attend to in the morning, and an entertainment at night, what time had she for lesser matters? And she had

to send some servants to Berkeley Square to get the rooms ready, as the family were to dine and sleep there; altogether she had a great deal upon her hands. Harry had his difficulties, too, in getting safely out of the house without Phil, who, abandoned by Edgar, and eluded by his cousin, was in a very restless state of mind, and had determined this morning, of all others, not to be left behind. Harry, however, inspired by the thoughts of Mrs. Smith, was too clever for Phil, and shot down the avenue like an arrow, with his books under his arm, happy in his legitimate and perfectly correct errand, to which no one could object. He left his message with the Witheringtons on his way, for he was too happy not to be virtuous, poor fellow. It damped his ardour dreadfully to find that no plea he could put forth would induce Margaret to go to the lecture.

"I don't take any interest in botany," she said, "and I have no time for it, to keep it up if I began."

"What of that," said Harry; "do you think I take an interest in botany?"

"But you are a great florist, Mr. Thornleigh," she said, demurely. It was some time before he remembered his pretence about the flowers.

"I shall bring you some specimens of my skill to-morrow," he said, laughing, with a flush of pleasure. At least, if she would not come to-day, here was an excuse for making another day happy—and as a lover lives upon the future, Harry was partially consoled for his disappointment. I don't think he got much good of the lecture; perhaps no one got very much good. Ellen Gregory did not come, for botany was not in her list of subjects for the pupil-teachers' examination, and Lady Mary did not take any notes, but only lent the students the encouragement of her presence; for she could not, notwithstanding what she had said, quite disabuse her own mind from the impression that this was a young lady-like science, and not one

of those which train the mind to thought. So that on the whole, as I have said, the chief result was that Myra "got up" Herr Hartstong to the great delight of all the light-minded population at Harbour Green, who found the professor much more amusing in that audacious young mimic's rendering than in his own person.

In the afternoon the whole party went to London. "Everybody is going," said little Milly, in huge excitement. "It is like the pantomime; and Phil is to do the cheering. Shouldn't you like to be him, Harry? It will almost be as good as being on the stage oneself."

"Don't talk of things you don't understand," said Phil, who was too grand to be spoken to familiarly, and whose sense of responsibility was almost too heavy for perfect happiness. "I shan't cheer unless they deserve it. But the rehearsal was awful fun," he added, unbending. "You'll say you never saw anything better, if they do half as well to-night."

Tottenham's was gorgeous to behold when the guests began to arrive. The huge central hall, with galleries all round it, and handsome carpeted stairs leading on every hand up to the galleries, was the scene of the festivity. On ordinary occasions the architectural splendour of this hall was lost, in consequence of the crowd of tables, and goods, and customers which filled it. It had been cleared, however, for the entertainment. Rich shawls in every tint of softened colour were hung about, coloured stuffs draped the galleries, rich carpets covered the floors; no palace could have been more lavish in its decorations, and few palaces could have employed so liberally those rich Oriental fabrics which transcend all others in combinations of colour. Upstairs, in the galleries, were the humbler servants of the establishment, porters, errand boys, and their relatives; down below were "the young ladies" and "the gentlemen" of Tottenham's occupying

the seats behind their patrons in clouds of white muslin and bright ribbons.

"Very nice-looking people, indeed," the Duchess of Middlemarch said, as she came in on Mr. Tottenham's arm, putting up her eyeglass. Many of the young ladies curtseyed to Her Grace in sign of personal acquaintance, for she was a constant patroness of Tottenham's. "I hope you haven't asked any of my sons," said the great lady, looking round her with momentary nervousness.

Mr. Tottenham himself was as pleased as if he had been exhibiting "a bold tenantry their country's pride" to his friends. "They *are* nice-looking, though I say it as shouldn't," he said, "and many of them as good as they look." He was so excited that he began to give the Duchess an account of their benefit societies, and saving banks, and charities, to which Her Grace replied with many benevolent signs of interest, though I am afraid she did not care any more about them than

Miss Annetta Baker did about the lecture. She surveyed the company, as they arrived, through her double eyeglass, and watched "poor little Mary Horton that was, she who married the shopkeeper," receiving her guests, with her pretty children at her side. It was very odd altogether, but then, the Hortons were always odd, she said to herself—and graciously bowed her head as Mr. Tottenham paused, and said, "How very admirable!" with every appearance of interest.

A great many other members of the aristocracy shared Her Grace's feelings, and many of them were delighted by the novelty, and all of them gazed at the young ladies and gentlemen of the establishment as if they were animals of some unknown description. I don't think the gentlemen and the young ladies were at all offended. They gazed too with a kindred feeling, and made notes of the dresses, and watched the manners and habits of "the swells" with equal curiosity and admiration. The

young ladies in the linen and in the cloak and mantle department were naturally more excited about the appearance of the fine ladies from a book-of-fashion point of view than were the dressmakers and milliners, who sat, as it were, on the permanent committee of the "Mode," and knew "what was to be worn." But even they were excited to find themselves in the same room with so many dresses from Paris, with robes which Wörth had once tried on, and ribbons which Elise had touched. I fear all these influences were rather adverse to the due enjoyment of the trial scene from Pickwick, with Miss Robinson in the part of Serjeant Buzfuzz. The fine people shrugged their shoulders, and lifted their eyebrows at each other, and cheered ironically now and then with twitters of laughter; and the small people were too intent upon the study of their betters to do justice to the performance. Phil, indeed, shrieked with laughter, knowing all the points, with the exactitude of a

showman, and led his *claque* vigorously; but I think, on the whole, the *employés* of Tottenham's would have enjoyed this part of the entertainment more had their attention been undisturbed. After the first part of the performances was over, there was an interval for "social enjoyment;" and it was now that the gorgeous footmen appeared with the ices, about whom Mr. Tottenham had informed his children. Lady Mary, perhaps, required a little prompting from her husband before she withdrew herself from the knot of friends who had collected round her, and addressed herself instead to the young ladies of the shop.

"Must we go and talk to them, Mr. Tottenham? Will they like it? or shall we only bore them?" asked the fine ladies.

The Duchess of Middlemarch was, as became her rank, the first to set them the example. She went up with her double eye-glass in her hand to a group of the natives

who were standing timorously together—two young ladies and a gentleman.

"It has been very nice, has it not," said Her Grace; "*quite* clever. Will you get me an ice, please? and tell me who was the young woman—the young lady who acted so well? I wonder if I have seen her when I have been here before."

"Yes, Your Grace;" said one of the young ladies. "She is in the fancy department, Miss Robinson. Her father is at the head of the cloaks and mantles, Your Grace."

"She did very nicely," said the Duchess, condescendingly, taking the ice from the young man whom she had so honoured. "Thanks, this will do very well, I don't want to sit down. It is very kind of Mr. Tottenham, I am sure, to provide this entertainment for you. Do you all live here now?—and how many people may there be in the establishment? He told me, but I forget."

It was the gentleman who supplied the

statistics, while the Duchess put up her eyeglass, and once more surveyed the assembly. "You must make up quite a charming society," she said; "like a party in a country-house. And you have nice sitting-rooms for the evening, and little musical parties, eh? as so many can sing, I perceive; and little dances, perhaps?"

"Oh no, Your Grace;" said one of the young ladies, mournfully. "We have practisings sometimes, when anything is coming off."

"And we have an excellent library, Your Grace;" said the gentleman, "and all the new books. There is a piano in the ladies sitting-room, and we gentlemen have chess and so forth, and everything extremely nice."

"And a great deal of gossip, I suppose," said Her Grace; "and I hope you have *chaperons* to see that there is not too much flirting."

"Oh, flirting!" said all three, in a

chorus. "There is a sitting-room for the ladies, and another for the gentlemen," the male member of the party said, somewhat primly, for he was one of the class of superintendents, vulgarly called shop-walkers, and he knew his place.

"Oh—h!" said the Duchess, putting down her eyeglass; "then it must be a great deal less amusing than I thought!"

"It was quite necessary, I assure you, Your Grace," said the gentleman; and the two young ladies who had been tittering behind their fans, gave him each a private glance of hatred. They composed their faces, however, as Mr. Tottenham came up, called by the Duchess from another group.

"You want me, Duchess?" how fine all Tottenham's who were within hearing, felt at this—especially the privileged trio, to whom she had been talking, "Duchess!" that sublime familiarity elevated them all in the social scale.

"Nothing is perfect in this world," said

Her Grace, with a sigh. "I thought I had found Utopia; but even your establishment is not all it might be. Why aren't they all allowed to meet, and sing, and flirt, and bore each other every evening, as people do in a country house?"

"Come, Duchess, and look at my shawls," said Mr. Tottenham, with a twinkle out of his grey eyes. Her Grace accepted the bait, and sailed away, leaving the young ladies in a great flutter. A whole knot of them collected together to hear what had happened, and whisper over it in high excitement.

"I quite agree with the Duchess," said Miss Lockwood, loud enough to be heard among the fashionables, as she sat apart and fanned herself, like any fine lady. Her handsome face was almost as pale as ivory, her cheeks hollow. Charitable persons said, in the house, that she was in a consumption, and that it was cruel to stop her duet with Mr. Watson, and to inquire into her past life, when,

poor soul, it was clear to see that she would soon be beyond the reach of all inquiries. It was the Robinsons who had insisted upon it chiefly—Mr. Robinson, who was at the head of the department, and who had daughters of his own, about whom he was very particular. His youngest was under Miss Lockwood, in the shawls and mantles, and that was why he was so inexorable pursuing the matter; though why he should make objections to Miss Lockwood's propriety, and yet allow Jemima to act in public, as she had just done, was more than the shop could make out. Miss Lockwood sat by herself, having thus been breathed upon by suspicion; but no one in the place was more conspicuous. She had an opera cloak of red, braided with gold, which the young ladies knew to be quite a valuable article, and her glossy dark hair was beautifully dressed, and her great paleness called attention to her beauty. She kept her seat, not moving when the others did,

calling to her anyone she wanted, and indeed, generally taking upon herself the *rôle* of fine lady. And partly from sympathy for her illness, partly from disapproval of what was called the other side, the young ladies and gentlemen of Tottenham's stood by her. When she said, "I agree with the Duchess," everybody looked round to see who it was that spoke.

When the pause for refreshments was over, Mr. Tottenham led Her Grace back to her place, and the entertainment recommenced. The second part was simply music. Mr. Watson gave his solo on the cornet, and another gentleman of the establishment accompanied one of the young ladies on the violin, and then they sang a number of part songs, which was the best part of the programme. The excitement being partially over, the music was much better attended to than the Trial Scene from Pickwick; and all the fine people, used to hear Joachim play, or Patti sing, listened with much gracious

restraint of their feelings. It had been intended at first that the guests and the *employés* should sup together, Mr. Robinson offering his arm to Lady Mary, and so on. But at the last moment this arrangement had been altered, and the visitors had wine and cake, and sandwiches and jellies in one room, while the establishment sat down to a splendid table in another, and ate and drank, and made speeches and gave toasts to their hearts' content, undisturbed by any inspection. What a place it was! The customers went all over it, conducted by Mr. Tottenham and his assistants through the endless warehouses, and through the domestic portion of the huge house, while the young ladies and gentlemen of Tottenham's were at supper. The visitors went to the library, and to the sitting-rooms, and even to the room which was used as a chapel, and which was full of rough wooden chairs, like those in a French country church, and decorated with flowers.

This curious adjunct to the shop stood open, with faint lights burning, and the spring flowers shedding faint odours.

"I did not know you had been so High Church, Mr. Tottenham," said the Duchess. "I was not prepared for this."

"Oh, this is Saint Gussy's chapel," cried Phil, who was too much excited to be kept silent. "We all call it Saint Gussy's. There is service every day, and it is she who puts up the flowers. Ah, ah!"

Phil stopped suddenly, persuaded thereto by a pressure on the arm, and saw Edgar standing by him in the crowd. There were so many, and they were all crowding so close upon each other, that his exclamation was not noticed. Edgar had been conjoining to the other business which detained him in town a great deal of work about the entertainment, and he had appeared with the other guests in the evening, but had been met by Lady Augusta with such a face of terror, and

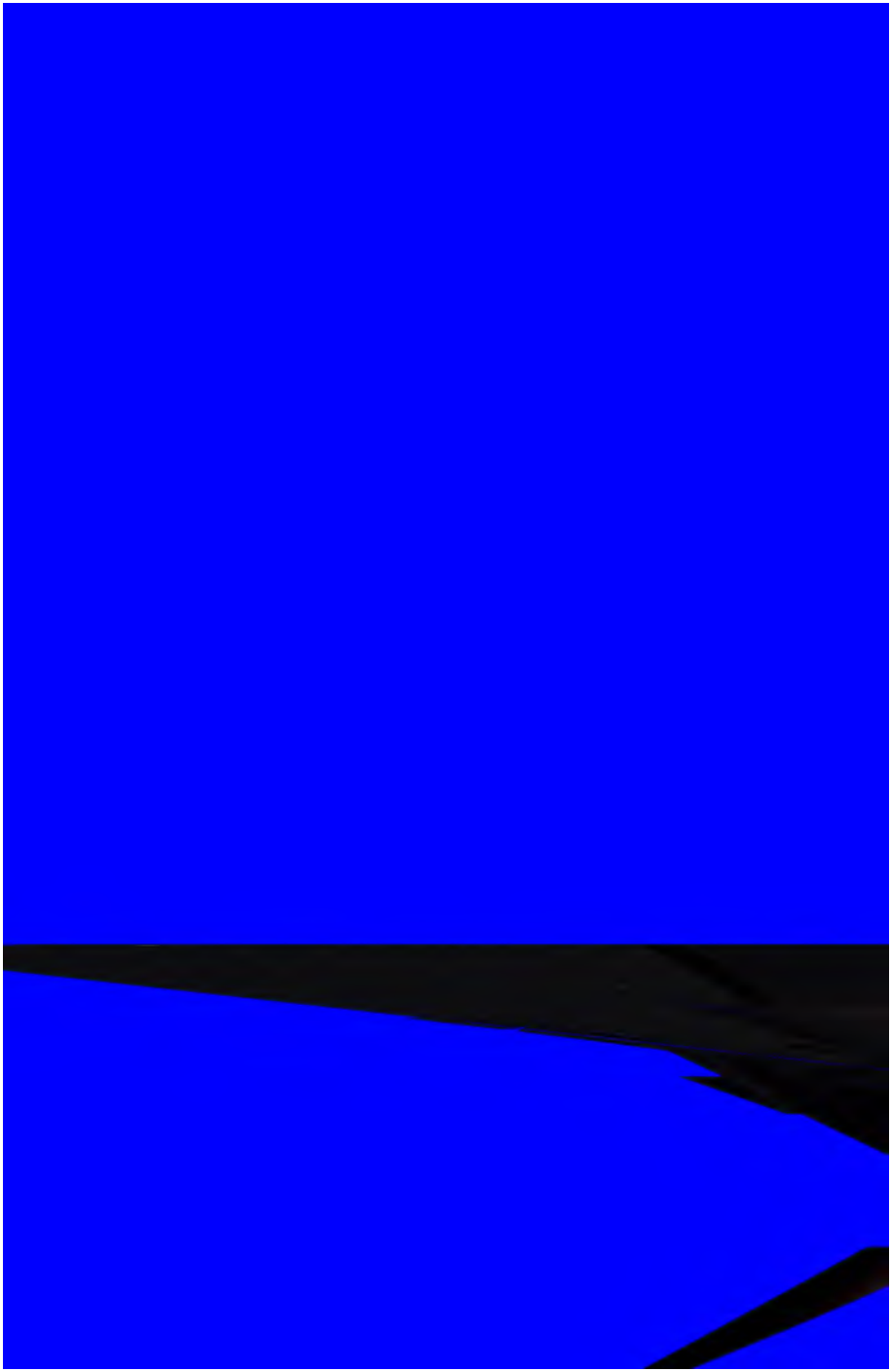
hurried anxious greeting, that he had withdrawn himself from the assembly, feeling his own heart beat rather thick and fast at the thought, perhaps, of meeting Gussy without warning in the midst of this crowd. He had kept himself in the background all the evening, and now he stopped Phil, to send a message to his father.

"Say that he will find me in his room when he wants me; and don't use a lady's name so freely, or tell family jokes out of the family," he said to the boy, who was ashamed of himself. Edgar's mind was full of new anxieties of which the reader shall hear presently. The Entertainment was a weariness to him, and everything connected with it. He turned away when he had given the message, glad to escape from the riot—the groups trooping up and down the passages, and examining the rooms as if they were a settlement of savages—the Duchess sweeping on in advance on Mr. Tottenham's arm, with

her double eye-glass held up. He turned away through an unfrequented passage, dimly lighted and silent, where there was nothing to see, and where nobody came. In the distance the joyful clatter of the supper-table, where all the young ladies and gentlemen of the establishment were enjoying themselves came to his ears on one side—while the soft laughter and hum of voices on the other, told of the better bred crowd who were finding their way again round other staircases and corridors to the central hall. It is impossible, I suppose, to hear the sounds of festive enjoyment with which one has nothing to do, and from which one has withdrawn thus sounding from the distance without some symptoms of a gentle misanthropy, and that sense of superiority to common pursuits and enjoyments which affords compensation to those who are left out in the cold, whether in great things or small things. Edgar's heart was heavy, and he felt it more heavy in consequence of the merry-making. Among all these people,

so many of whom he had known, was there one that retained any kind thought of him—one that would not, like Lady Augusta, the kindest of them all, have felt a certain fright at his reappearance, as of one come from the dead? Alas, he ought to have remained dead, when socially he was so. Edgar felt, at least, his resurrection ought not to have been here.

With this thought in his mind, he turned a dim corner of the white passage, where a naked gas-light burned dimly. He was close to Mr. Tottenham's room, where he meant to remain until he was wanted. With a start of surprise, he saw that some one else was in the passage coming the other way, one of the ladies apparently of the fashionable party. The passage was narrow, and Edgar stood aside to let her pass. She was wrapped in a great white cloak, the hood half over her head, and came forward rapidly, but uncertain, as if she had lost herself. Just before they met, she stopped short, and uttered a low cry.

Had not his heart told him who it was? Edgar stood stock still, scarcely breathing, gazing at her. He had wondered how this meeting would come about, for come it must, he knew—and whether he would be calm and she calm, as if they had met yesterday? Yet when the real emergency arrived he was quite unprepared for it. He did not seem able to move, but gazed at her as if all his heart had gone into his eyes, incapable of more than the mere politeness of standing by to let her pass, which he had meant to do when he thought her a stranger. The difficulty was all thrown upon her. She too had made a pause. She looked up at him with a tremulous smile and a quivering lip. She put out her hands half timidly, half eagerly; her colour changed from red to pale, and from pale to red. "Have you forgotten me, then?" she said.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.